



**RHODE ISLAND KIDS COUNT**

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## **Testimony Re: Senate Bill 816 Adult Education**

**Senate Education Committee**

**May 29, 2019**

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Madam Chair and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today. Rhode Island KIDS COUNT would like to voice its concern for one portion of Senate Bill 816. This bill would establish the office of adult education and literacy in the Rhode Island governor's workforce board, transfer staffing of adult education and literacy to the Department of Labor and Training and provide sole responsibility for administering and supervising policy and funding for adult education through the office of adult education and literacy.

Our concern is regarding the inclusion of 16 and 17-year-old students in this proposed bill. It is unclear if a student will continue to have access to age-appropriate, rigorous and flexible learning opportunities based on student interests as currently mandated by Rhode Island law. In 2011, the General Assembly passed legislation that changed the compulsory school attendance age from 16 to 18 years old. Under this law, a student can waive this attendance requirement with an approved Alternative Learning Plan (ALP). An ALP may include extended learning opportunities as independent study, private instruction, performing groups, internships, community service, apprenticeships, and online courses that are currently funded and available to the school department and/or the community. Failure to participate in the ALP can result in student referral to truancy. Alternative learning plans can be critical components to meeting the needs of students for whom traditional educational settings are a challenge. Currently ALPs are under the purview of school districts and the Rhode Island Department of Education.

While we support greater access for 16 and 17-year-old students to career training opportunities offered through the Department of Labor and Training we believe it is important for the responsibility of basic education remain with the Rhode Island Department of Education.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today.