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**Testimony Re: Senate Bill No. 653**

**Senate Education Committee**

**April 3, 2019**

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Chairwoman Gallo and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today. Rhode Island KIDS COUNT would like to voice its support for Senate Bill 653. This bill would establish courses that include instruction in career and technical education programs, including knowledge of careers and all types of employment opportunities in K-12 curricula. This will complement existing efforts to help students prepare for successful lives.

Rhode Island KIDS COUNT is lead convener of the Rhode Island Alliance for College and Career Readiness. The Alliance was established in 2017 to raise awareness about the connection between college and career readiness, the success of individual students, and the economic prosperity of our state. As an alliance we understand early exposure to a broad range of careers increases student engagement, college enrollment and success, and entry into high wage-earning careers. This early exposure allows students and families to explore careers, pursue career pathways and CTE opportunities, and apply for apprenticeships, internships, certification programs and college courses while still in high school.

We commend the current efforts to prepare Rhode Island students for college and career. These efforts include:

PrepareRI

Prepare RI is a statewide initiative to prepare all Rhode Island youth with the skills they need for jobs that pay. Initiatives of PrepareRI include the PrepareRI Internship Program, Career and Technical Education programs, The Advanced Course Network which allows middle and high school students to take courses at other schools, private colleges and other providers for free, Dual Enrollment which allows high school students to take credit-earning college courses, P-TECH which allows high school students to earn an associate's degree while in high school, and Advanced Placement courses which allows students to begin taking college-level courses while in high school.

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

Rhode Island's ESSA plan includes a Post-Secondary Success Indicator that will initially measure the percentage of students that graduate with a career and technical education industry-approved credential, college credits through dual or concurrent enrollment, and/or successful completion of AP tests. Starting with the graduating Class of 2021, the Post-Secondary Success Indicator will be further expanded to include the Pathway Endorsement, a certification that a student has prepared for employment or further education in a career path.

There is more work to be done to prepare all Rhode Island students for the high-wage, high-demand jobs of tomorrow. Many students from low-income families and first-generation students face barriers to entry into these careers from an early age. These barriers include lack of exposure to high wage-earning careers and understanding of career pathways. Currently, not all students have access to the type of career exposure needed to adequately prepare for high-wage earning careers.

- 7% of PK-8 students have access to an educator trained in priority sector career exploration.
- 6% of Rhode Island students in the 2014 9th grade cohort received an industry-recognized credential in a Governors Workforce Board priority sector.
- 36% of K-12 students have access to career pathway programs in one of the Governor Workforce Board priority sectors.

Adding career exploration into the K-12 curriculum coupled with implementation of individual learning plans and additional resources for school guidance counselors can help increase college and career readiness for Rhode Island students.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.