



Testimony Re: House Joint Resolution 7396 -- Amendment to the Rhode Island Constitution -- Right to An Adequate Education

Senate Education Committee

March 14, 2024

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Mr. Chairman 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 House Resolution 7396 and thank Representative Messier for sponsoring and representatives Knight, Kislak, Morales, Handy, Serpa, Fellela, Donovan, Speakman, and Spears for co-sponsoring. This bill would place before the voters in the 2024 general election the ability to amend the state's Constitution to provide all students with equal opportunities to receive an **adequate, equitable, and meaningful education**, a right that would be judicially enforceable.

Rhode Island KIDS COUNT believes all children deserve access to a high-quality public education from Pre-K through college. Education is the gateway to opportunity for children and families and is vital to the economic prosperity of our state. The quality of a student's education should not depend on the zip code or city in which they live.

In recent years, Rhode Island has taken several steps to ensure that all children have access to the high-quality education they need to succeed in school, career, and life. One of these critical steps was developing a Basic Education Plan (BEP) that outlines the rights of every student in the Rhode Island public education system and sets basic standards to help ensure that high-quality education is available to all public-school students, regardless of where they live or go to school. Yet, even after these essential steps, we know that there are still inequities between school districts and that many of the school districts that serve high numbers of low-income students, Students of Color, and Multilingual Learner students, still require assistance in meeting the BEP requirements.

Passing this resolution would help close the remaining gaps, ensure that all children receive the high-quality educational opportunities they need to succeed in today's high-skills economy and provide a judicial enforcement mechanism to ensure compliance.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today and for all you do on behalf of the children and youth of Rhode Island.