



Contact: Katherine Linwood Chu, Communications Manager
401-351-9400, Ext. 22 / kchu@rikidscount.org
Please join the conversation on social media: #RIFactbook

Rhode Island KIDS COUNT Releases 24th Annual *Factbook* on the Status of Rhode Island's Children

Providence, RI (April 9, 2018) – Rhode Island KIDS COUNT released its twenty-fourth annual report on the well-being of Rhode Island's children at a **policy breakfast on Monday, April 9, 2018 from 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m.** Over 500 people attended the event, including Governor Gina Raimondo, Senator Jack Reed, Senator Sheldon Whitehouse, Congressman James Langevin, Congressman David Cicilline, Representative Joseph McNamara, Senator Joshua Miller, General Assembly members, policymakers, and community leaders from education, health, and human services. The event took place at the Crowne Plaza, 801 Greenwich Avenue, Warwick, RI.

Rafael López, Managing Director for Accenture's Health & Public Service North America practice and former Commissioner of the Administration on Children, Youth and Families at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, gave keynote remarks. Marie Shabani of Young Voices Rhode Island addressed the crowd about how to support young people to reach their full potential. A Pre-K class from Beautiful Beginnings Child Care Center in Providence kicked off the event by singing.

“Our children are our most valuable resource. For Rhode Island to prosper, we must invest in their families, their communities and in their classrooms,” said López. “Closing opportunity gaps is of utmost importance. Our prosperity depends on the success of all children, and the racial and ethnic disparities that persist for Rhode Island children of color are a powerful alarm bell and call to action.”

The 2018 Rhode Island Kids Count Factbook

The *2018 Rhode Island Kids Count Factbook* charts improvements and declines in the well-being of Rhode Island's 208,640 children. Data are presented for the state as a whole and for each of Rhode Island's 39 cities and towns. The *Factbook* indicators are grouped into five interrelated categories: family and community, economic well-being, health, safety, and education. There are a total of 71 indicators of child well-being in the 2018 *Factbook*.

Presentation of the *Factbook* to State Leaders

Bryant presented the *2018 Rhode Island Kids Count Factbook* to Governor Gina Raimondo, Senator Jack Reed, Senator Sheldon Whitehouse, Congressman James Langevin, Congressman David Cicilline, Representative Joseph McNamara, and Senator Joshua Miller.

Victor Capellan, Central Fall School District Superintendent and Mary Varr, Executive Director of Woonsocket Head Start Child Development Association, Inc., also received a *Factbook* in recognition of their work to improve the lives of children and families.

“The *2018 Rhode Island Kids Count Factbook* shows challenges and improvements for child and family outcomes across Rhode Island. We have made great progress as a state, but we have much more work to do,” said Bryant. “Wide gaps continue to exist between children of color and white children in nearly every *Factbook* indicator, and these gaps will hold Rhode Island back in terms of our educational and workforce goals and future prosperity.”

The Rhode Island Kids Count Factbook presents data on population trends and demographics. Rhode Island’s child population has decreased by 16% from 247,822 children in 2000 to 208,640 in 2016.

“The research is clear on the importance of a strong foundation in the early years to set the stage for later school success. We are encouraged that more low-income Rhode Island children are enrolled in public preschool through the State Pre-K Program and Head Start, with 41% of Rhode Island’s low-income students enrolled in one of those two programs, and all Rhode Island kindergarten students now have access to full day kindergarten. A critical next step is for the state to increase the quality of child care by joining 41 other states in implementing tiered quality rates for the Child Care Assistance Program — because learning begins at birth and quality child care matters.

“We are also closely watching the trends of children involved in the child welfare system. Overall increases in the caseload of the Department of Children, Youth, and Families, increases in maltreatment reports, and increases in cases of child abuse and neglect are cause for concern, and we need to be sure there are resources in place to provide the full range of responses and services needed. A positive finding is an increase in the number of children being cared for in foster families rather than in congregate care.

“The 2018 *Factbook* presents data on several positive children’s health outcomes, all of which depend on children’s access to primary health care. We are pleased that our state leaders continue to make smart investments in children’s health coverage, resulting in Rhode Island being third best in the nation with 98% of children covered.”

Bryant concluded, “Regardless of our individual role, we have a shared responsibility to work together to improve the lives of children and youth. We know you will use the *Factbook* to do your best work on behalf of Rhode Island children.”

Rhode Island KIDS COUNT is a statewide children’s policy organization that works to improve the health, economic well-being, safety, education and development of Rhode Island children.