



Testimony Re: H-7152 The Rhode Island Early Childhood Innovation Act

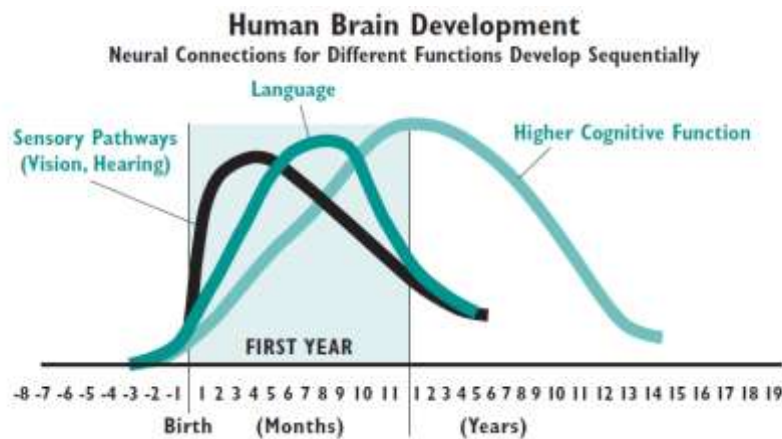
House Health, Education & Welfare

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Elizabeth Burke Bryant, Executive Director

Chairman McNamara 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 H-7152. This bill would establish a \$1 million early childhood innovation fund to be administered by the Rhode Island Department of Human Services to fund research-based programs for infants and toddlers that will help to close the achievement gap for at-risk children as they enter kindergarten.

The basic architecture of the human brain develops during the first three years of life. By age three, a child’s brain has grown to 90% of its adult size and the foundation of many cognitive structure and systems are in place. Disparities in learning based on access to enriched experiences begin to appear in the first years of life and, without intervention, grow over time. Access to high-quality early learning opportunities from birth through kindergarten entry, both at home and in the community, helps prepare children for success in school.



Two examples of the kinds of programs that would be among the research-based programs that could benefit from an Early Childhood Innovation Fund would be Providence Talks that focuses on closing the gap in early language development for low income children and Reach Out and Read which enlists pediatricians to talk to parents about the importance of reading to young children (and which provides an age-appropriate book for parents to take with them at each well-child visit). This Innovation Fund will be an important part of the overall early childhood system.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.