



Testimony Re: S-2347 Out of School Time Learning Commission

Senate Education Committee

February 28, 2018

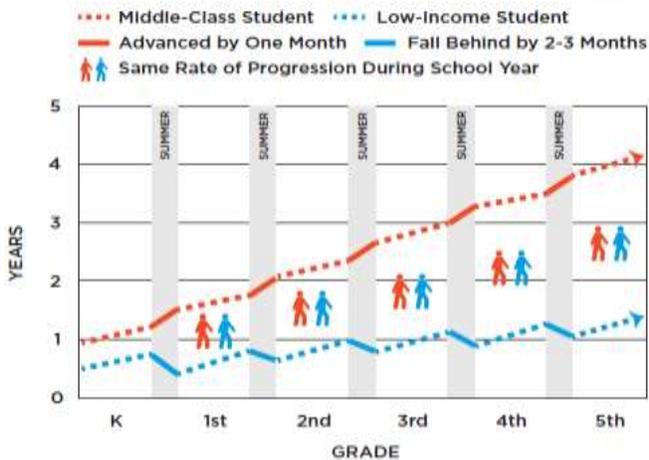
Leanne Barrett, Senior Policy Analyst

Rhode Island KIDS COUNT would like to voice its **support for Senate Bill 2347**. This bill would establish a permanent joint legislative commission to improve access to high-quality after school and summer learning opportunities for children in Rhode Island. The new commission would oversee implementation of the plan developed under the 2009 Rhode Island After School and Summer Learning Program Act.

As you may know, Rhode Island KIDS COUNT and the United Way of Rhode Island are coordinating Rhode Island Reads, a statewide campaign to raise awareness about the importance of third grade reading proficiency. Reading proficiency in third grade is a key predictor of school success and high school graduation. Research shows that children who are not proficient readers by the end of third grade are four times more likely to drop out of high school than proficient readers. Currently, only 40% of third graders in Rhode Island are meeting expectations for reading.

High-quality afterschool and summer learning opportunities can help close the reading proficiency gap. Research has shown that low-income elementary school students lose up to two months of reading skills over the summer while their higher-income peers make gains. Over time, this summer learning loss widens the language and literacy gap that is present between low-income and higher-income students at kindergarten entry so that low-income students are almost three grade levels behind in reading skills by the end of fifth grade.

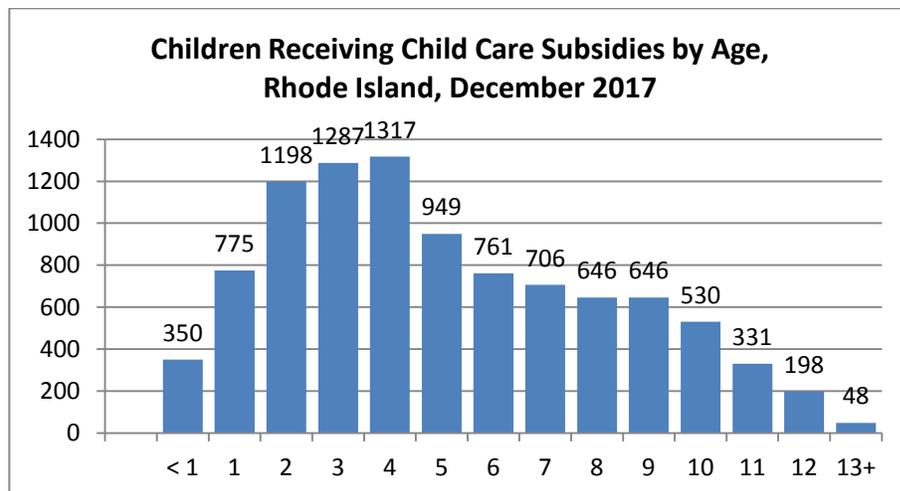
THE EFFECT OF SUMMER LEARNING LOSS ON READING SKILLS, GRADES K-5



Children of all income levels need access to high-quality expanded learning opportunities during the summer and after school. The planning bill passed in 2009 called for resources to expand after school and summer learning that builds on the existing infrastructure in the state including child care programs, 21st Century Community Learning Centers, Child Opportunity Zones (COZs), community-based organizations, and public schools.

Rhode Island KIDS COUNT recommends that the Out of School Time Learning commission work hand-in-hand with the Permanent Legislative Commission on Child Care to improve opportunities for children and youth.

Currently, the state manages two systems to provide access to after school and summer programs. One is managed by the Rhode Island Department of Education to invest federal 21st Century Community Learning Center funds and serves approximately 11,500 children during the school year and 3,200 children during the summer from ages 4 through 18. The other system is managed by the Rhode Island Department of Human Services which provides child care subsidies to approximately 3,300 school-age children to attend after school and summer programs. The Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) is currently paying rates that are well below the market rate for school-age programs which means that families have difficulty accessing high-quality programs that provide enriching learning opportunities after school and during the summer. We also recommend passage of S-2120, sponsored by Senator Crowley to establish tiered quality rates for all ages of children in the CCAP program, with high-quality programs receiving rates at the nationally recommended benchmark level (75th percentile of the market rate).



Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. We urge you to support S-2347.

