



## Testimony Re: House Bill 5853 Regarding The Rhode Island Early Childhood Innovation Act

House Finance

April 30, 2019

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RHODE ISLAND KIDS COUNT

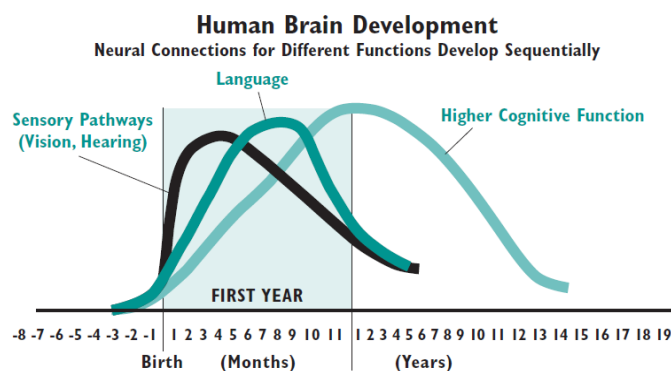
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Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today. Rhode Island KIDS COUNT would like to voice its support for the intent of House Bill 5853. This bill would establish a \$1 million Early Childhood 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.

Rhode Island KIDS COUNT's early childhood program priorities for increased state funding during this legislative session are to: adjust rates for the **Child Care Assistance Program** to meet the federal benchmark for quality, sustain and expand **State Pre-K**, and provide state funding to sustain the current **evidence-based home visiting** programs in our state.

The Innovation fund is a good idea and potentially provide resources to **Providence Talks** and **Reach Out and Read** to **complement the funding needed for foundational early childhood programs**.



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Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.