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Testimony Re: House Bill 5887 Regarding Right to Read Act

House Health, Education & Welfare Committee

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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 strong support for House Bill 5887 which would create the Right to Read Act. This Act would require licensed elementary school teachers to be proficient in scientific reading instruction.

As of June 2018, there were 21,488 students ages six to 21 receiving special education services through Rhode Island public school. Thirty-six percent of these students had a learning disability. Learning disabilities are neurologically-based processing problems. These processing problems can interfere with learning basic skills such as reading, writing, and math, or acquiring other skills such as organization, time management, abstract reasoning, and attention. Learning disabilities can affect a student's performance in school, success in the workplace, and relationships with family and friends.

In the U.S., approximately 80% of children who have an IEP for a learning disability have their primary difficulties in learning how to read. Students with reading disabilities often require intensive instruction individualized to meet their needs in order to make progress and reach proficiency levels. There are several evidence-based instructional techniques that can help children with reading disabilities acquire proficiency in reading.

As you may know, Rhode Island KIDS COUNT and the United Way of Rhode Island have been coordinating Rhode Island Reads, a statewide campaign to raise awareness about the importance of third grade reading proficiency. Governor Raimondo joined the Campaign and established a statewide goal of doubling the number of third graders who are reading on grade level by 2025. **Currently, only 40% of third graders in Rhode Island are meeting expectations for reading.**

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.

This proposed legislation will focus attention on supporting reading instruction. Rhode Island KIDS COUNT supports efforts to ensure that

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school teachers in the state have access to evidence-based professional development in reading instruction, including identifying and teaching children with dyslexia and reading disabilities and educator preparation programs prepare graduates in scientific reading instruction.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.