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Testimony Re: Senate Bill 863 Regarding Curriculum

Senate Education Committee

May 15, 2019

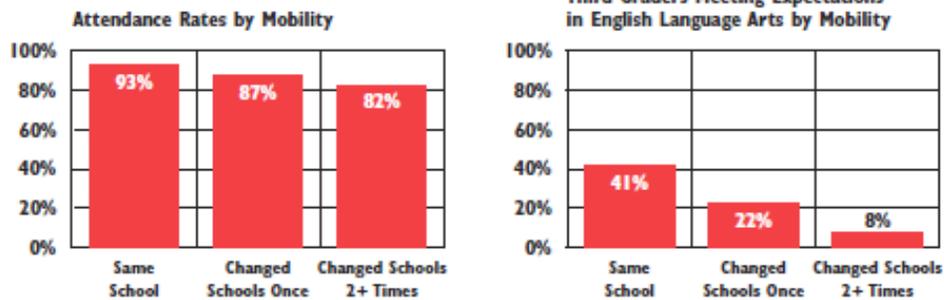
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Madam Chair and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today. Rhode Island KIDS COUNT would like to voice its strong support of Senate Bill 863. This bill would require the development of statewide academic standards and curriculum frameworks for core subjects, require the commissioner to identify at least five examples of high-quality curriculum and material for each core subject, require school districts to select and implement identified high-quality curriculum, and require Rhode Island Department of Education to provide support and assistance to districts in implementing the selected curriculum.

Improving student achievement rates in Rhode Island will require that schools and community leaders implement comprehensive, evidence-based strategies that lead to proficiency in reading and math, maintain high academic standards across the curriculum in all grades, and ensure that all youth graduate from high school with the skills they need to succeed in college and in Rhode Island's workforce. Consistent high-quality curriculum that is aligned with standards and state tests is an essential ingredient for moving our state forward.

Consistent high-quality curriculum can have significant impact on children who move frequently. Student mobility is associated with lower academic performance, behavior difficulties, lower levels of school engagement, and increased risk of dropping out of high school. Changing schools can disrupt learning, can negatively impact a student's achievement, and can cause social upheaval for children. Students who change schools frequently are more likely to have lower math and reading skills, more likely to repeat a grade, more likely to be suspended, and less likely to graduate from high school than their non-mobile peers. Regardless of income status and ethnicity, mobility can negatively affect student achievement. However, low-income and minority children are more likely to be mobile and experience greater negative impacts on their academic achievement, than higher-income and White students. Students receiving special education services also are likely to be negatively impacted by changing schools. School districts with high mobility rates can reduce the negative effects of mobility on students by aligning their curricula, programs, and policies to reduce learning disruption.

School Mobility and Education Outcomes in Rhode Island, 2017-2018



Source: Rhode Island Department of Education, 2017-2018 school year.

Between 2013 and 2017 in Rhode Island, 11% of children ages five to 17 changed residence at least once during the previous year, 79% of whom moved within Rhode Island.

High-Quality Curriculum

According to the American Teacher Panel, 48% of teachers in Rhode Island report curriculum and instructional materials that are rigorous and engaging as the most important indicator for meeting the needs of students. However, it is estimated that students in the U.S. spend 581 hours each school year on assignments that are not high quality. The majority of school districts in Rhode Island use locally-developed instructional materials that have not been reviewed by RIDE or an independent agency. For this reason Rhode Island KIDS COUNT supports the provision that requires the commissioner to identify high-quality curricula. We urge the General Assembly to continue to provide resources needed to ensure all students have access to high-quality curriculum.

Student-Centered Learning

Adopting student-centered learning practices can increase engagement and achievement for students from a variety of backgrounds and ensure that students graduate from high school with important social and emotional skills, including problem solving, critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and strong work habits that are essential for success in college and careers. We are pleased that the proposed bill requires the high-quality curriculum to encourage real-world application, multi-disciplinary problem solving, project-based learning, performance assessments, and alignment of classroom instruction with work-based learning opportunities.

Thank you to the bill sponsors for your urgency in addressing the needs of Rhode Island's children. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.