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Testimony Re: Article 5, Housing and Infrastructure Bond Question 3 (d) regarding the early childhood care and education capital fund

House Finance Committee

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Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today.

As a member of the **steering committee of the Right from the Start Campaign**, Rhode Island KIDS COUNT strongly supports **Article 5, Question 3 (d)** which authorizes \$15 million in bond funding for physical improvement to and development of licensed early childhood care and education facilities.

We also support **Article 10, Section 8 – The Rhode Island Early Childhood Care and Education Capital Fund Act**, which establishes a capital fund as a competitive grant program to improve and expand community-based early learning program facilities administered by the Rhode Island Department of Human Services. Child care and early learning facilities are aging, have inadequate resources to make improvement, and have very limited resources to expand. More than half of the buildings that house early learning programs in the state are in poor condition.

Investing in high-quality early childhood programs is **a strong investment in the Rhode Island economy as these programs support today's workforce** (more than 70% of children have all parents in the workforce) **and tomorrow's workforce** since the foundation's of lifelong health and learning take place in the earliest years and are supported by high-quality child care and Pre-K programs.