



RHODE ISLAND KIDS COUNT

ONE UNION STATION
PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND 02903
401/351-9400 • 401/351-1758 (FAX)

Testimony Re: House Bill 7640 Regarding Proposition of Amendment to the Constitution -- Right to an Adequate Education

House Health, Education, & Welfare Committee

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Stephanie Geller, Senior Policy Analyst

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 House Bill 7640. If this bill is passed, an amendment to the state's constitution would be placed before the voters this fall which would state that all Rhode Islanders must be provided with an equal opportunity to receive an education that is "adequate to permit them to achieve at high levels and to become lifelong learners, productive workers, and responsible citizens" and that this right is judicially enforceable.

At Rhode Island KIDS COUNT we strongly believe that all children in our state deserve access to a high-quality public education from Pre-K through college. Education is the gateway to opportunity for children and families and is vital to the economic prosperity of our state.

In recent years, Rhode Island has taken a number of steps to ensure that children have access to the kind of high-quality education they need to succeed in school, career, and life. One of these key steps was instituting an education funding formula that is based on five key principles – equity, adequacy, predictability, accountability, and efficiency. Another key step was developing a Basic Education Plan (BEP) to ensure that all students in the state have access to high-quality and effective educational opportunities from pre-kindergarten through grade 12 (PK-12) designed to help them learn the skills and knowledge they need to succeed in the 21st Century.

Even after these important steps, we know that there are still inequities between school districts and that many of the school districts that serve high numbers of low-income, minority, and English-Language Learner students struggle to meet the requirements of the BEP. Passing this bill would help close the gaps that remain and ensure that all children receive the high-quality educational opportunities they need to succeed in today's high-skills economy.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today and for all you do on behalf of the children and youth of Rhode Island.