



RHODE ISLAND KIDS COUNT

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Testimony Re: S209 Regarding: Advanced Placement Courses for All Students Act
Senate Education Committee
March 3, 2021
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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 support for elements of Senate Bill 209. This bill would change the definition of advance placement to mean a college level class taught at the high school level, expand access to advanced placement courses, and add requirements to the annual report issued by the Rhode Island Department of Education.

Rhode Island KIDS COUNT is the lead convener of the **Rhode Island Alliance for College and Career Readiness**. The Alliance was established in 2017 to raise awareness about the connection between college and career readiness, the success of individual students, and the economic prosperity of our state. The Alliance advocates for legislative changes needed to increase college and career readiness and access and to address racial, ethnic, and income disparities.

Many students, especially low-income students, face barriers to college enrollment and success. Improving access and exposure to advanced coursework including Advanced Placement (AP) courses, dual and concurrent enrollment, work-based learning opportunities, and career preparation courses can help address these barriers.

Rhode Island has experienced consistent growth in the number of students participating in college and career readiness opportunities. Since 2015, there has been a 35% increase in Advanced Placement participation. **Although there has been growth in college and career readiness opportunities, there continue to be gaps in college credits earned by high school students by race, ethnicity, income, and special education and Multilingual/English Learner status.** Closing these gaps will require a thorough analysis of the barriers students face and what can be done to eliminate barriers and provide equitable access to rigorous and engaging learning opportunities that provide paths to success in college and careers for all students.

States can help address barriers and improve college access by ensuring that all students have access to advanced coursework including Advanced Placement (AP) courses and dual and concurrent enrollment courses.

We support expansion of the annual report to the General Assembly on the Advanced Placement teacher training program to include data related to the number of low-income students who participate in Advanced Placement courses. We urge the committee to consider including the requirement for the report to include the number of low-income students who take the Advanced examination and become eligible for college credit at Rhode Island public secondary institutions.

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I have enclosed our report [Equitable Access to College and Career Readiness Opportunities](#). This report examines student-centered learning policies and practices that support equitable access to college and career readiness opportunities and provides recommendations for how Rhode Island can ensure that these opportunities are available for all students, particularly low-income students, students of color, and students in high-need communities.

Rhode Island KIDS COUNT supports efforts to expand access to equitable college and career readiness opportunities. We urge the continued funding of both the Advanced Placement courses and the Rhode Island Promise Scholarship as both programs serve to increase access to college for all students.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.