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## Testimony Re: H-5339 Relating to Education – Education Services to Very Young Children

House Education Committee

March 1, 2023

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**Rhode Island KIDS COUNT strongly supports passage of Rep. Donovan’s bill, H-5339**, which would remove the outdated two-tiered system to oversee community-based early care and education programs and would require public schools to participate in the BrightStars Quality Rating and Improvement System, a valid and reliable framework with research-based standards to improve children’s health, safety, learning, and development.

Starting in the 1960s (or before), **Rhode Island has had two separate systems** to oversee and support community based early care and education programs that serve children from infancy through entry to public school.

**The education agency was responsible for approving the operations of nursery schools or community-based preschools** for children age 2 years, 9 months and up. **Many of these programs served privileged families** where at least one parent stayed home full-time with children.

**The child welfare system was responsible for licensing child care centers and family child care homes, and before that they oversaw children’s day shelters and day/overnight orphanages** for families with working mothers, many of whom were very low income.

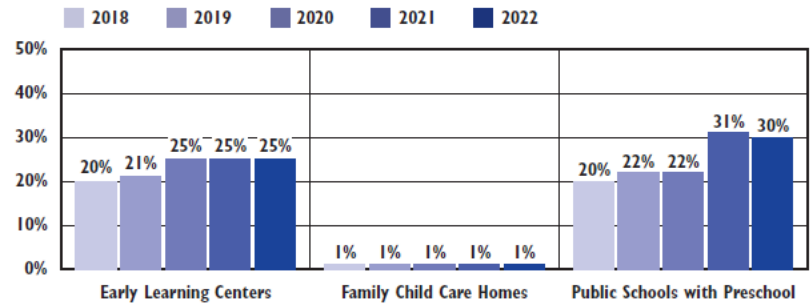
**Now, licensing of community based early care and education programs is the responsibility of the Department of Human Services** which assumed responsibility for child care and early learning program licensing in 2019 and oversees the child care subsidy program for families and houses the federal Head Start Collaboration office.

BrightStars was developed as our state’s Quality Rating and Improvement System for child care and early learning programs and has been in operation since 2009 after being established in RI state law in 2007. There are 49 states that have a Quality Rating and Improvement System in place.

As of 2022, 50% of public schools with preschool classrooms in Rhode Island were already participating in BrightStars. Thirty percent of schools that serve preschoolers had a high-quality rating of four- or five-stars.

Participation in BrightStars helps schools and programs meet quality standards that we know improve child outcomes.

**Percentage of Early Learning Centers, Family Child Care Programs,  
and Public Schools with a High-Quality  
BrightStars Rating (4 or 5 Stars), Rhode Island, 2018-2022**



Source: RI Association for the Education of Young Children, Rhode Island Department of Human Services, Rhode Island Department of Education, and RI Early Care and Education Data System (ECEDS), January 2018 – January 2022.

Rhode Island KIDS COUNT urges passage of this bill requested by the RI Department of Education. The bill will help to remove outdated systems and ensure that all settings that support young children’s development are aligned on quality standards.