



**kids**

**count**

**RHODE ISLAND KIDS COUNT**

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

**Testimony Re: Senate Bill 825 Re: Community Schools Act**  
**Senate Education Committee**  
**April 28, 2021**  
**Paige Clausius-Parks, Senior Policy Analyst**

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 Senate Bill 825. This bill would provide financial support for the planning, implementation, and expansion of community schools beginning in FY2021.

In Rhode Island, Child Opportunity Zones (COZs) sustain and expand the community school model which aims to improve the academic outcomes of students by creating a partnership between school, families, and community partners. Community schools integrate academic, health, and social services to provide a range of supports and opportunities to students and families. Community schools are coordinated by a school or community agency. In Rhode Island, COZs serve nearly 10,000 children and more than 8,000 adults each year.

Community schools are a powerful equity strategy because they are designed to identify and address inequitable practices, disrupt the systems that perpetuate educational and economic disparities, and increase opportunities for all students through partnerships with organizations that impact children. Many community schools have the existing infrastructure that enabled them to mobilize support services and connect with students and families quickly during the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent school closures.

Rhode Island KIDS COUNT supports efforts to expand access to high-quality community schools.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.