



RHODE ISLAND KIDS COUNT
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Testimony Re: House Bill 7915 Re: The Rhode Island Quality Enhancement in Afterschool and Out-of-School Time Act
House Finance Committee
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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 **strong support** for **House Bill 7915** and thank Representative Casimiro for sponsoring this important bill and Representatives Noret, Kazarian, Tanzi, Batista, Donovan, Shallcross Smith, and Alzate for co-sponsoring. This bill would provide \$2 million to support high-quality afterschool, summer learning, and workforce development programs.

High-quality, organized after-school, summer, and out-of-school time programs improve the supervision and safety of youth, promote positive social skills, and, with sufficient dosage, improve student achievement. Quality out-of-school time programs provide engaging activities that are intentionally designed to promote youth development and are taught by trained, dedicated instructors who work effectively with youth. Youth who participate consistently can show improved competence, caring, and connections.

School hours only cover 20% of the time children and youth have available for learning, forming friendships, developing and practicing skills, and exploring interests. What children do during out-of-school time matters for success in school and life. Yet, there are not enough affordable, high-quality, out-of-school time programs to meet the needs of families and youth.

Currently, the state manages two systems to provide access to after school and summer programs. One of these systems is managed by the Rhode Island Department of Education to invest federal 21st Century Community Learning Center funds and served approximately 8,193 children and youth during the 2019-2020 school year and 1,852 children during the summer of 2019. The other system is managed by the Rhode Island Department of Human Services which provides child care subsidies to school-age children to attend after school and summer programs.

The Afterschool Alliance, a national non-profit and leading source of data and research on afterschool programs, reports **58,942 children in Rhode Island are without access to affordable, high-quality afterschool programs. Resources are needed to expand access.** In Rhode Island, the Providence After School Alliance and the Rhode Island Afterschool Network (a United Way of Rhode Island program) act as intermediaries to address access issues and support program quality improvement.



Students Served by 21st Century Community Learning Centers by Grade Span, Rhode Island, 2019-2020 School Year

SCHOOL DISTRICT	GRADES PK-3	GRADES 4-5	GRADES 6-8	GRADES 9-12	TOTAL
Cranston	116	56	109	2	283
East Providence	62	45	151	0	258
Newport	388	225	275	356	1,244
Pawtucket	458	264	10	0	732
Providence	290	191	1,250	2,101	3,832
West Warwick	107	39	0	0	146
Woonsocket	187	130	150	557	1,024
<i>Charter Schools</i>	<i>164</i>	<i>121</i>	<i>96</i>	<i>105</i>	<i>486</i>
<i>State-Operated Schools</i>			<i>4</i>	<i>60</i>	<i>64</i>
<i>UCAP</i>			<i>123</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>124</i>
<i>Rhode Island</i>	<i>1,772</i>	<i>1,071</i>	<i>2,168</i>	<i>3,182</i>	<i>8,193</i>

Source: RI Department of Education, Office of Student, Community and Academic Supports, 2019-2020 school year.
Data are not unduplicated as students can be served by more than one grantee. UCAP is the Urban Collaborative Accelerated Program.

There is a substantial gap between high-quality afterschool and out-of-school time opportunities available to youth from low-income families compared to opportunities for youth from higher-income families, and higher-income families spend almost seven times more on enrichment activities which **contributes to persistent gaps in student outcomes**.

Out-of-school time programs have provided crucial services to students and families during the COVID-19 pandemic including assistance with academics, accessing technology, and addressing food insecurity for families. Rhode Island should continue to view out-of-school time providers as part of the system of supports for students and families.

State investments are needed to expand access to high-quality afterschool and summer programs and to build and sustain an effective out-of-school time workforce. We urge you to pass this important legislation. High-quality afterschool and summer programs are a key strategy for helping children who have lost learning time due to the pandemic catch up on academics and can help reengage children and youth who had high rates of absenteeism or been disengaged. These programs also support children's social-emotional health.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.