

Remarks – Paige Clausius-Parks/EBB Celebration

Good evening and thank you for joining us tonight to celebrate the legacy of one of our favorite people, Elizabeth Burke Bryant. And it's so fitting that this event occurs during Women's History Month. Where we are excited to share our appreciation for RI's queen of child advocacy.

Tonight's event was made possible thanks to the support of terrific sponsors:

- Rhode Island Foundation
- Blue Cross Blue Shield of Rhode Island
- Current and Former Board Members of Rhode Island KIDS COUNT
- BankRI
- United Way of Rhode Island Women United
- Girl Scouts of Southern New England
- LISC Rhode Island
- Fidelity Investments
- Navigant Credit Union
- Mutual of America Financial Group
- And The Providence Public Library – for donating this beautiful space

Thank you to all our sponsors for making tonight possible.

Thank you to all the individuals who donated to Rhode Island KIDS COUNT in honor of Elizabeth. Your contributions will support the mission of Rhode Island KIDS COUNT and keep the great work that Elizabeth started, going.

I'd also like to recognize the staff that helped make this event possible:

Wilsa Galarza, Katy Linwood, Stephanie Geller, Dorene Bloomer, Jennifer Capaldo, Kelsey Bala, Kaitlyn Rabb, Jessica Vega, and Leanne Barrett.

The mission of Rhode Island KIDS COUNT is to improve the health, safety, education, economic well-being, and development of Rhode Island's children with a commitment to equity and the elimination of unacceptable disparities by race, ethnicity, disability, zip code, immigration status, neighborhood, and income.

RI KIDS COUNT as become the state's leading child policy and advocacy organization through the hard work, intentionality, strategic thinking, and gentle spirit of Elizabeth Burke Bryant. Kids have been at the forefront of policymakers minds because Elizabeth insisted on it. She did not rest until the issues that matter to kids and families mattered to everyone.

Under her leadership, Rhode Island KIDS COUNT has had many legislative victories, has served to be the early supporter of many great powerhouse community organizations and programs.

And we can't talk about Rhode Island KIDS COUNT without talking about the Rhode Island KIDS COUNT Factbook. The Factbook began as a much smaller book- 84 pages and now is the state's most comprehensive statistical portrait of the status of Rhode Island's children and families now 196 pages, a status symbol for policymakers and community leaders, and a model publication across the country.

Elizabeth is recognized as national expert on children's issues and has propelled Rhode Island's success stories into national dialogue. Elizabeth had a frame in her office that said Don't Mess With Texas, Or Rhode Island. Always being a cheerleader for our state.

Elizabeth has left many marks of greatness on RI, but the one I am so personally grateful for is your vision and leadership in recruiting and cultivating incredible, powerhouse staff and board to lead and execute our mission.

The work of Rhode Island KIDS COUNT is fueled by the passion of its people, and you have an uncanny talent in being able to recognize talent, recruit that talent, and provide opportunities for your talented staff to grow, learn, and lead and you did so with a laser focus goal of creating equity and commitment to diversifying of our staff and board.

Under your leadership,

- 50% of our staff identify as People of Color.

- And 70% of Our Board identify as People of Color
- We partner with grassroots organizations led by People of Color and those with lived experience— organizations like Young Voices, ARISE, the Latino Policy Institute, Progreso Latino, Dorcas International Institute of Rhode Island, and the Economic Progress Institute and we are active participants

in coalitions like Right from the Start, The Immigrant Coalition of Rhode Island, Raising RI coalition, and the Interfaith Coalition to Reduce Poverty, so our policy and advocacy work is informed by the community from the start.

- And you have amplified youth voice by creating opportunities for youth to shine and share their expertise.

I asked our staff to share what words or phrases that come to mind when they think of Elizabeth and here's what they said:

- Inside-outside partnerships
- Persistent
- Positive
- Persistently Positive
- Putting kids at the center
- Tenacious
- Respectful
- Dutiful
- Courageous
- Inspiring
- Bold
- Grace under pressure
- Bright
- Peacemaker

- Energized
  - Dedicated
  - Cheerleader
  - Mission Driven
  - Collaborator
  - Strategic
  - Melting iced coffees
  - Willing
  - Capable
  - Energetic
- 
- Gift for connection
  - Good with kids and politicians
  - Tireless in a way that only those who have followed their true calling can be

Thank you, Elizabeth, for sharing your calling with each of us. Thank you for being the pitbull in a poodle costume for kids, family, and for each of us- your staff.

You are remarkable.