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Rhode Island KIDS COUNT Luncheon to Celebrate Rhode Island's Excellence in Children's Health Insurance Coverage and Health Outcomes

Luncheon celebrates the progress Rhode Island has made in increasing access to high-quality health coverage — Rhode Island is ranked 4th best in the nation for children's health coverage — and the legislation passed during this year's session that will keep our state moving forward.

Providence, RI (November 17, 2022) – More than 200 community leaders, elected officials, and health care advocates will gather on November 21, 2022 for the annual Celebration of Children's Health Luncheon to reflect on the progress that Rhode Island has made in achieving positive health outcomes for children — including the fact that Rhode Island is ranked fourth best in the nation for children's health coverage. The event will also highlight policy measures to keep children healthy: *Cover All Kids* and the *Trauma-Informed Schools Act* passed this legislative session.

This event is especially noteworthy for Rhode Island KIDS COUNT:

- This is the last public event for Rhode Island KIDS COUNT's Executive Director, Elizabeth Burke Bryant, who has been the organization's only Executive Director and who built and strengthened the advocacy organization for the past 28 years.
- Paige Clausius-Parks, who has been named as next Executive Director, will also provide remarks at the event.
- This is also the first large in-person gathering that Rhode Island KIDS COUNT has hosted since the COVID-19 pandemic.

Covering Kids Awards will be presented to elected officials for their contributions to increasing access to health insurance coverage and health care for children, including Senator Jack Reed, Senator Sheldon Whitehouse, Congressman James Langevin, Congressman David Cicilline, Governor Dan McKee, Lieutenant Governor Sabina Matos, and Speaker Joseph Shekarchi.

Representative David Morales, Senator Sandra Cano, and Representative Marcia Ranglin-Vassell will receive *Covering Kids Awards* for their leadership on *Cover All Kids* (Morales, Cano) and the *Trauma-Informed Schools Act* (Ranglin-Vassell, Cano).

The event will also highlight the important role that youth, parents, and other community members play in achieving important policy changes that support children's health. **Paris Khoule**, a student and member of Young Voices, will be honored for her leadership in advocating for the *Trauma-Informed Schools Act* and her work to raise awareness about the need for more school-based mental health supports. **Sucely Murillo**, a parent and community activist, will be honored for her leadership in advocating for the *Cover All Kids* bill and for her strong advocacy on housing and immigration issues and her community volunteerism.

Rhode Island Census Data on Children Health Insurance Coverage

Rhode Island KIDS COUNT will highlight new data from the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS). The ACS provides national and state-level data on health insurance coverage.

- The latest data shows that in 2021, 2.5% (approximately 5,697) of Rhode Island children did not have health insurance.
- (This means that) In 2021, 97.5% of Rhode Island children under age 19 had health coverage.
- Pre-pandemic, 1.9% (approximately 4,000) of Rhode Island children were uninsured in 2019.
- Rhode Island ranks 4th among all states, and 4th in New England for children's health insurance coverage.

Rhode Island's Positive Health Outcomes for Children

Rhode Island also leads the nation in many children's health outcomes:

- Adolescent HPV Vaccination (1st)
- Children's Health Coverage (4th)
- Child and Teen Deaths (4th)
- Infant Mortality (5th)

Policy Measures to Keep Rhode Island Children Healthy

Health Insurance Coverage

- In Rhode Island: While many families lost employment in 2020 and 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and likely also lost employer-sponsored health insurance coverage, many of Rhode Island's children remained insured due to RIte Care. RIte Care is our state's comprehensive, high-quality health insurance program for low-income families.
 - *Cover All Kids*: The 2022 Rhode Island legislative session reestablished Rhode Island's commitment to provide health insurance to low-income children who are residents of the state, regardless of immigration status (also called the ***Cover All Kids bill***).
- Nationally: In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Congress increased funding for Medicaid and passed laws to keep individuals from losing

Medicaid coverage during the national public health emergency. These changes likely helped maintain health coverage for children.

“*Cover All Kids* passed this legislative session, and that’s a fantastic victory for our children and families,” said Elizabeth Burke Bryant, Executive Director of Rhode Island KIDS COUNT. “We are thankful for the passage of *Cover All Kids* which will give more Rhode Island children access to RIte Care health insurance coverage. However, we are also aware that families will need to reapply for RIte Care in order to maintain coverage when the national health emergency ends. We will be closely monitoring the re-enrollment process to ensure that our kids stay insured and also advocating for continuous coverage for children to ensure that they do not lose access to the regular health care they need.”

Trauma-Informed Schools

In Rhode Island, one in five (19%) children ages six to 17 has a diagnosable mental health condition; one in 10 (9.8%) has a significant functional impairment. Feelings of safety and connection with school can promote and protect student mental and emotional well-being.

- Legislation passed that establishes the implementation of trauma-informed practices in all elementary and secondary schools and creates a trauma-informed commission. The *Trauma-Informed Schools Act* creates a universal approach designed to help students who have experienced trauma; however, the strategies and practices will benefit all children by creating positive school climates.

“Restorative practices, social-emotional learning, and positive disciplinary practices are important strategies for addressing student trauma and help to create positive student-teacher relationships, improve students’ sense of belonging, build safe schools, and increase academic outcomes,” said Elizabeth Burke Bryant, Executive Director of Rhode Island KIDS COUNT. “Our state and our children are experiencing a mental health crisis, and the *Trauma-Informed Schools* bill will help give our schools the knowledge and tools they need to support students.”

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[Rhode Island KIDS COUNT](#) is a statewide children’s policy organization that works to improve the health, economic well-being, safety, education and development of Rhode Island children, with a core focus on equity.