



Contact: Katherine Linwood Chu, Communications Coordinator  
401-351-9400, Ext. 22 / [kchu@rikidscount.org](mailto:kchu@rikidscount.org)

## **Rhode Island KIDS COUNT Releases 22<sup>nd</sup> Annual *Factbook* on the Status of Rhode Island's Children**

Warwick, RI (April 11, 2016) – Rhode Island KIDS COUNT released its twenty-second annual report on the well-being of Rhode Island's children at a policy breakfast attended by over 500 people, including Governor Gina Raimondo, Senator Jack Reed, Congressman James Langevin, Congressman David Cicilline, House Speaker Nicholas Mattiello, Senate President Teresa Paiva Weed, General Assembly members, policymakers, and community leaders from education, health, and human services. The event took place on Monday, April 11, 2016, from 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. at the Crowne Plaza, 801 Greenwich Avenue, Warwick.

The *2016 Rhode Island Kids Count Factbook* charts improvements and declines in the well-being of Rhode Island's 212,000 children. The *Factbook* provides the latest available data on 71 indicators of child well-being for the state as a whole and in each of Rhode Island's 39 cities and towns. The *Factbook* indicators are grouped into five interrelated categories: family and community, economic well-being, health, safety, and education.

Elizabeth Burke Bryant, Executive Director of Rhode Island KIDS COUNT, opened the policy breakfast by stating, "Our state's well-being and economic future depends on healthy children and strong families. Rhode Island's investments in high quality child care, early education, health care, K-12 and higher education are what improve children's chances for success today and in the future. The information presented in the *2016 Rhode Island Kids Count Factbook* can help our state leaders and policymakers make well-informed policy decisions that support the well-being of all children and families in Rhode Island."

Keynote remarks were provided by Lisa Hamilton, Vice President, External Affairs at The Annie E. Casey Foundation. "The importance of measuring trends over time, and clearly communicating that data, cannot be overstated," said Hamilton. "Tracking outcomes and indicators allows us to know what issues are affecting children, and where investments must be made to turn the curve in the right direction. Rhode Island KIDS COUNT is a national leader in providing the best available data and research to help create – and

implement – good policies for children and families. From focusing on closing achievement gaps, to increasing access to high quality health care and early learning opportunities, to continuing declines in children involved in the juvenile justice system, Rhode Island has seen the benefits of using data to drive change.”

Christian Ortiz of Young Voices Rhode Island spoke to the crowd about how to support young people to reach their full potential. The Pleasant View Elementary School and William D'Abate Elementary School choruses performed two songs.

### **Presentation of the *Factbook* to State Leaders**

Bryant presented the *2016 Rhode Island Kids Count Factbook* to Governor Gina Raimondo, Senator Jack Reed, Congressman James Langevin, Congressman David Cicilline, House Speaker Nicholas Mattiello, and Senate President Teresa Paiva Weed. Anna Cano Morales, Director of the Latino Policy Institute at Roger Williams University, and Rabbi Alan Flam, Executive Director of the Helen Hudson Foundation for Homeless America, were each presented with a *Factbook* in recognition of their work to improve the lives of children and families.

“The data highlighted in this year’s *Factbook* show challenges and improvements for child outcomes across Rhode Island,” said Burke Bryant. “We see progress with decreasing unemployment and increasing high school graduation rates, but we still have an unacceptably high number of children in poverty. Our economic prosperity as a state requires access to high-quality education and the educational achievement of current students in Rhode Island, while also improving the education levels and job skills of their parents. And while we see good news in health care coverage, a steady decline in lead poisoned children, and that we lead the nation in the lowest teen death rate; we are concerned about the increases in babies born with exposure to substances and the increases in hospitalizations of children related to mental health issues. We know you will use the *2016 Rhode Island Kids Count Factbook* to do your best work on behalf of children – whether you are an elected official, a teacher, a parent, a pediatrician, state agency staff, business leader, or faith leader. We have made great progress as a state, and we have much more work to do.”

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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.*