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## **Rhode Island KIDS COUNT Releases 23<sup>rd</sup> Annual *Factbook* on the Status of Rhode Island's Children**

Warwick, RI (April 4, 2017) – Rhode Island KIDS COUNT will release its twenty-third annual report on the well-being of Rhode Island's children at a **policy breakfast on Monday, April 10, 2017 from 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m.** Over 500 people are expected to attend, including Governor Gina Raimondo, Senator Sheldon Whitehouse, Congressman James Langevin, Congressman David Cicilline, House Speaker Nicholas Mattiello, Senator Joshua Miller, General Assembly members, policymakers, and community leaders from education, health, and human services. The event will take place at the Crowne Plaza, 801 Greenwich Avenue, Warwick.

Child advocate, attorney, and author Liz Huntley will give keynote remarks. Ritsuko Tani of Young Voices Rhode Island will address the crowd about how to support young people to reach their full potential. Soraiya will kick off the event by singing the national anthem.

Elizabeth Burke Bryant, Executive Director of Rhode Island KIDS COUNT, said, "Healthy, well-educated children and strong families are the bedrock of Rhode Island's well-being. We can't succeed economically without smart investments in our children and families. Today we take stock of where Rhode Island effectively supports our children's development, and where we need to focus increased attention and efforts. By implementing well-informed, data-driven policies, we can improve the health, development and education outcomes for Rhode Island's children that will pave the way for the strong workforce and engaged citizens Rhode Island needs to thrive."

Reflecting on the preschool teachers who recognized her potential, Liz Huntley said, "It's the game-changing people who looked beyond the stereotypes of my background that directed me on my path for success. I challenge you to be on alert for those moments when you can say or do something that has a game-changing effect on someone else's life. Be a game-changer for Rhode Island children."

### **The Rhode Island Kids Count Factbook**

The *2017 Rhode Island Kids Count Factbook* charts improvements and declines in the well-being of Rhode Island's 212,000 children. Data are presented 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.

This year, Rhode Island KIDS COUNT added a new indicator on *College Enrollment and Completion* to the *2017 Factbook*, bringing the total number of child well-being indicators to 72. Please see pages 3-15 for an **Executive Summary of the 2017 Factbook findings**, and pages 16-18 for additional updates and changes to this year's *Factbook*.

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

Bryant will present the *2017 Rhode Island Kids Count Factbook* to Governor Gina Raimondo, Senator Sheldon Whitehouse, Congressman James Langevin, Congressman David Cicilline, House Speaker Nicholas Mattiello, and Senator Josh Miller. Khadija Lewis Khan, Director of Beautiful Beginnings, will also receive a *Factbook* in recognition of her work to improve the lives of children and families.

"The *2017 Rhode Island Kids Count Factbook* shows challenges and improvements for child and family outcomes across Rhode Island. We have made great progress as a state, but we have much more work to do," said Bryant. "We're closely watching the trends of children involved in the child welfare system. Increases in adoption, and fewer children and youth in congregate care placements are positive trends, while the increased number of child maltreatment reports taken together with the decreased number of completed investigations and indicated investigations is a cause for concern and will require increased vigilance for our most vulnerable children. We are excited that this year is the first with all Rhode Island kindergartners in full-day classrooms, and that more low-income Rhode Island children are enrolled in public preschool through the State Pre-K Program and Head Start. While we are pleased that our state leaders continue to make smart investments in children's health coverage, and that there are fewer mental health-related hospitalizations, we're concerned about increases in babies born with exposure to substances and the persistent need for more mental health services. Regardless of our individual role, we have a shared responsibility to work together to improve the lives of children and youth. We know you will use the *Factbook* to do your best work on behalf of Rhode Island children."

*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.*