

Rhode Island



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**RHODE ISLAND KIDS COUNT**

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**Rhode Island KIDS COUNT Presents:  
*Pawtucket Data in Your Backyard***

***Median family income down in Pawtucket where more than  
1 in 4 children live in poverty.***

***Education outcomes, including reading proficiency and  
graduation rates, improving in Pawtucket.***

***Child abuse and neglect rate high in Pawtucket; 21.7 victims of  
child abuse and neglect per 1,000 children in Pawtucket,  
compared to 14.0 per 1,000 children statewide.***

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**Pawtucket, RI (June 4, 2012)** – Congressman David Cicilline joined an audience of community leaders, parents and policy makers today to discuss opportunities for improving the well-being of children and youth in Pawtucket. Stephanie Geller, Policy Analyst for Rhode Island KIDS COUNT, presented data from the *2012 Rhode Island Kids Count Factbook*, focusing on improvements and declines in the well-being of children and youth in Pawtucket. After the presentation, community members discussed opportunities to improve outcomes for Pawtucket children and youth. The presentation took place on **Monday, June 4, 2012, from 9:30 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. at St. Paul's Episcopal Church, 50 Park Place, Pawtucket, RI** and was brought to the community in partnership with the Pawtucket School Department Child Opportunity Zone.

**Median family income is down in Pawtucket, more than 1 in 4 children live in poverty**

According to the *2012 Rhode Island Kids Count Factbook*, the median income of Pawtucket families has decreased over the past decade, while the median family income for the state has increased slightly. Data from the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS) show that Pawtucket's median family income of

\$37,892 per year is among the lowest in the state.

While Pawtucket's median family income has decreased, poverty has increased among the city's children. In 2011, the poverty level was \$18,123 for a family of three with two children and \$22,811 for a family of four with two children. Between 2006 and 2010, 27.3% (4,505) of Pawtucket's children were living in poverty. During that same time period, 16.7% (37,925) of the state's children were living in poverty. In 2000, 25.3% of children in Pawtucket were living in poverty and 16.9% of children in Rhode Island were living in poverty.

One in 10 children in Pawtucket live in families in extreme poverty or with incomes less than one-half the federal poverty level. In 2011, the extreme poverty level was \$9,062 for a family of three with two children and \$11,406 for a family of four with two children. Between 2006 and 2010, 10.3% (1,703) of Pawtucket's children were living in extreme poverty, compared 7.4% (16,711) of Rhode Island's children during the same time period.

"Pawtucket is one of the four cities we term core cities because it has one of the highest child poverty rates in the state," noted Elizabeth Burke Bryant, Executive Director of Rhode Island KIDS COUNT. "Poverty exists in every community in Rhode Island, but the four core cities warrant special attention. Families living in these cities, which have higher concentrations of poverty, are more likely to have difficulty affording basic necessities, such as food, housing and health care, and children are less likely to do well in school and more likely to drop out."

### **Gains made in reading proficiency, more work to be done in math**

Students in Pawtucket continued to show improvement in reading proficiency, in both fourth and eighth grade. Between 2005 and 2011, the percentage of fourth-grade students in Pawtucket public schools who scored proficient in reading on the state's standardized test, the *New England Common Assessment Program (NECAP)* increased from 48% to 60%. Eighth-grade students also showed steady improvement in reading proficiency, rising from 44% proficient in 2005 to 67% proficient in 2011.

"It is vital that all children are able to read at grade level by the end of third grade," stated Bryant. "When children have difficulty reading beyond third grade, they often need intensive interventions to learn to read proficiently. We can help ensure that more children read proficiently by third grade by continuing to invest in high-quality early learning programs and by identifying struggling readers early and providing help before they fall further behind their classmates."

While Pawtucket students are improving in reading, progress has been much slower in

math. The district's fourth and eighth grade math proficiency rates continue to be among the lowest in the state. Between 2005 and 2011, the percentage of fourth-grade students in Pawtucket public schools who were proficient in math increased from 42% to 48%. Eighth-grade students also showed only a slight improvement during the same time period, with 37% proficient in 2005 and 38% proficient in 2011.

"Achieving math proficiency for all students requires improvement in curriculum, teaching materials, professional development and classroom practice," noted Geller, who noted that districts across the state continue to struggle to improve math proficiency and that both the state and the district must continue to commit resources to improve math proficiency.

### **Graduation rate shows continued improvement, but continues to be the lowest in the state.**

Pawtucket's high school graduation rate is still among the lowest in the state, but the district's rate is improving steadily. In Pawtucket in 2011, 63% of students graduated from high school in four years. This rate is lower than any district except Woonsocket, which also has a 63% graduation rate, and lower than the state rate of 77%. Pawtucket has made substantial progress in increasing its graduation rate in recent years, improving from 48% in 2007 to 63% in 2011.

"Graduation rates can be improved by using data to identify at-risk students during elementary and middle school," said Bryant. "Early warning systems connected to personalized and timely academic and social support can help get students back on track for graduation."

### **Infant health outcomes continue to need improvement**

More needs to be done to improve health outcomes for the city's youngest residents. Early prenatal care is important to identify and treat health problems and influence health behaviors that can compromise fetal development, infant health and maternal health. In recent years, the percentage of Pawtucket mothers receiving delayed prenatal care has increased from 12.5% in 2001-2005 to 18.3% in 2006-2010. Pawtucket has the third highest percentage of mothers receiving delayed prenatal care in the state.

"Increasing access to health insurance coverage can help improve outcomes for infants and their mothers," noted Bryant. "Low-income women with Medicaid coverage are more likely to have timely prenatal care than women who are uninsured. It is important to continue to maintain and protect programs like RIte Care, the state's Medicaid managed care health program, which provides access to health care for Rhode Island's children and families."

Pawtucket also has higher rates of preterm births, low birthweight infants and infant mortality than the state as a whole.

### **Child abuse and neglect rate high in Pawtucket**

Another issue of concern in Pawtucket is the city's rate of child abuse and neglect. In 2011, there were 359 indicated victims of child abuse and neglect, a rate of 21.7 victims per 1,000 children, substantially higher than the state rate of 14.0 victims per 1,000 children.

"Children in families facing social and economic struggles are at increased risk for child abuse and neglect," said Stephanie Geller, Policy Analyst for Rhode Island KIDS COUNT. "Providing support to such families through access to high-quality, affordable child care and evidence-based home visiting programs, like the Nurse-Family Partnership, can help prevent child abuse and neglect from occurring or reoccurring."

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*Rhode Island KIDS COUNT is a statewide children's policy organization that works to improve the economic well-being, health, safety, education and development of Rhode Island children.*