

## RHODE ISLAND KIDS COUNT

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## Statement by Elizabeth Burke Bryant, Executive Director of Rhode Island KIDS COUNT, on the passage of the Health Care and Education Affordability Reconciliation Act of 2010

## Rhode Island KIDS COUNT Applauds Health Care Reform - Passage Improves Health Access for Children and Families in Rhode Island and Across the Nation

## March 24, 2010

Providence, RI – Health reform is a major victory for children and families. It delivers what Rhode Island families need: affordable, reliable health coverage that won't disappear if they lose a job or get sick.

Health care reform will deliver quality coverage for the whole family:

- Requires insurance companies to provide pediatrician-recommended care for children so they can grow and thrive.
- Allows parents to keep their children up to age 26 on their family health plans.
- Continues RIte Care, a successful federal-state partnership between Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) that has worked to cover 79,000 children and 41,000 parents last year in Rhode Island with high quality coverage at an affordable cost.

Health care reform will mean more affordable coverage for Rhode Island children and families:

- Allows low-income children and parents to be covered together through Medicaid/CHIP programs and for moderate-income families to be covered together through health insurance exchanges.
- Implements family-friendly systems with less red tape. This will protect families from bureaucracies that deny coverage and care and allow health care resources to be spent covering kids and families.
- Provides tax credits to families who need extra help in order to afford coverage through health insurance exchanges.

Health care reform will ensure that Rhode Island children and families have coverage that they can rely on when they need it most:

- Ensures that losing a job no longer means Rhode Island families also have to worry about becoming uninsured.
- Ends insurance companies' discrimination based on pre-existing conditions.

Rhode Island KIDS COUNT thanks President Obama for making health coverage a policy priority and applauds Rhode Island's entire Congressional Delegation, which was unanimous in its support for health care reform. As they did with the reauthorization of the Children's Health Insurance Program last year, Senator Jack Reed, Senator Sheldon Whitehouse, Congressman Patrick Kennedy and Congressman James Langevin have shown true leadership on health coverage issues.

Rhode Island's Congressional Delegation and the members of the Rhode Island General Assembly have long supported RIte Care, Rhode Island's Medicaid/CHIP managed care health insurance program for low-income and moderate-income families. We encourage our federal and state officials to continue their work to make sure that families can get health coverage when they need it the most. It is important to reduce barriers in the RIte Care application process and make it as simple as possible for children and families to retain coverage once enrolled.

Although health care reform will deliver on the promise of covering more people in the coming years, there will still be uninsured Rhode Islanders in the short-term. Thanks to RIte Care, we can start to cover some of those uninsured children and families right now.

As a first win for families, we can help the estimated 13,000 children in Rhode Island who qualify for RIte Care based on their family's income to secure this coverage. Families who need health insurance can apply for RIte Care coverage today by going to <a href="https://www.dhs.ri.gov">www.dhs.ri.gov</a> or by calling 401-462-5300. Families that would like help in applying can find a Family Resource Counselor who can explain the application process and help with paperwork at <a href="https://www.rihca.org">www.rihca.org</a> or by calling 401-271-1171, extension 217.

Improving access to health insurance coverage and making sure that all children have quality health care have always been key priorities for Rhode Island KIDS COUNT. We know from our success with RIte Care that primary preventive care is cost-efficient for the state and gets children and families the care they need to be healthy. Now we can truly finish the job and cover all kids. We look forward to working with our partners to enroll eligible children and families in RIte Care and ensure that all Rhode Islanders have affordable health coverage.

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