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Testimony Re: House Bill 7164 Regarding Right to Read Act
House Education Committee
February 2, 2022
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Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today. Rhode Island KIDS COUNT would like to voice its opposition to elements of House Bill 7164. This bill would extend the time period for teachers to demonstrate proficiency in the knowledge and practices of scientific reading and structured literacy instruction and allow at least 15 years of experience teaching reading at the elementary level as demonstration of proficiency in the practices of scientific reading instruction.

Reading proficiency in third grade is a key predictor of school success and high school graduation. Research shows that children who are not proficient readers by the end of third grade are four times more likely to drop out of high school than proficient readers.

In the U.S., 75% of teachers working with early readers used some methods not backed by research to teach reading. Evidence-based instructional techniques can help children with reading disabilities acquire proficiency in reading.

Rhode Island KIDS COUNT supports extending the time period for all teachers to demonstrate proficiency but urges the committee to remove the language allowing at least 15 years of experience teaching reading at the elementary level to serve as a substitute for demonstrating proficiency in the practices of scientific reading and structured literacy instruction from the proposed legislation. It is critical for all certified elementary school teachers, regardless of previous teaching experience, to demonstrate proficiency in scientific reading instruction.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.