



RHODE ISLAND KIDS COUNT
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Testimony Re: H-7139 an Act Relating to State Affairs and Government –
Open Meetings

House State Government and Elections Committee

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Rhode Island KIDS COUNT strongly supports H-7139 which allows for remote/virtual participation in Open Meetings.

Parents with young children and direct service providers often work long hours, are very likely to live in economically unstable households, and have additional caregiving responsibilities that can make it difficult for them to participate in open meetings – either as members of public decision-making or advisory body or as members of the public.

H-7139 would allow for remote/virtual participation through July 1, 2022 in Open Meetings as was done during the pandemic under Executive Order. We believe this a critical change that has helped out government function during the pandemic and this change should be made permanent.

In our experience, allowing for remote/virtual participation has enabled many more people and many under-represented stakeholders to participate in key meetings – including youth, parents of young children, early educators, health care providers, and program leaders.

We need more parents, educators, and service providers to serve on public decision-making bodies and participate in Open Meetings so their voices can be heard and represented in decision-making bodies that establish policy and allocate resources for children.