



**Testimony Re: House Bill 5605 Regarding RI Promise**  
**House Education Committee**  
**April 7, 2021**  
**Paige Clausius-Parks, Senior Policy Analyst**

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 support for House Bill 5605.** This bill would allow students with disabilities to participate in the Rhode Island Promise scholarship program with reasonable accommodations including part-time study.

Rhode Island KIDS COUNT is the lead convener of the **Rhode Island Alliance for College and Career Readiness**. The Alliance was established in 2017 to raise awareness about the connection between college and career readiness, the success of individual students, and the economic prosperity of our state. The Alliance identifies and advocates for legislative and regulatory changes and budgetary investments needed to increase college and career readiness and access and to address racial, ethnic, and income disparities.

Between 2018 and 2028, jobs requiring a postsecondary degree or certificate are projected to grow faster than jobs requiring less education. Between 2014 and 2018 in Rhode Island, adults with high school diplomas were almost three times more likely to be unemployed as those with bachelor's degrees or higher. Making the Rhode Island Promise Scholarship Program accessible to students with disabilities will allow our state to continue to make progress in increasing college access, enrollment, and completion by ensuring that our young people have the financial resources they need to enroll in and complete a postsecondary degree or certificate.

**Affordability is not the only barrier to increasing Rhode Island's college enrollment and completion rates, but it is an important one.** We also support the Governor's proposal to expand the RI Promise Scholarship to include working parents, students who have amassed college credits, and students who were unable to enroll at CCRI immediately after high school due to COVID-19. And we are always available to share ideas about how to make the RI Promise Program the best program it can be so we can help more students achieve their dream of college and at the same time improve the economic prosperity of our state.

Thank you for the leadership that the General Assembly has shown in investing in children from birth through college and investing in the education and training of our state's workforce and thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.