



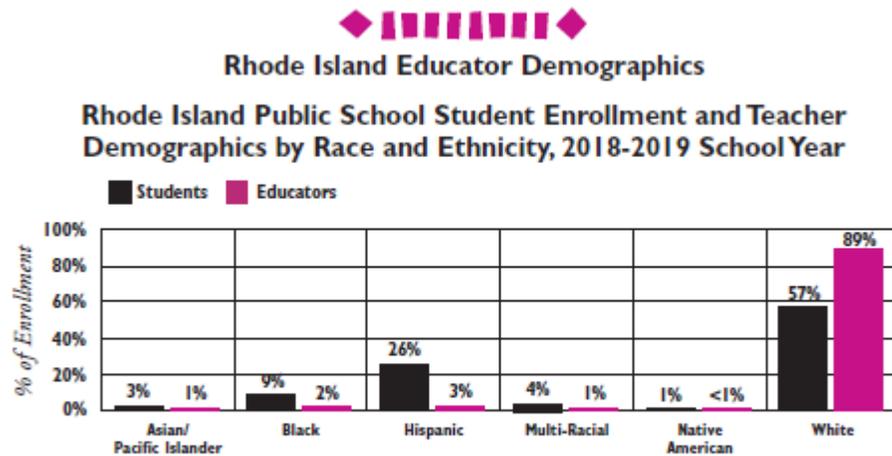
RHODE ISLAND KIDS COUNT
 ONE UNION STATION
 PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND 02903
 401/351-9400 • 401/351-1758 (FAX)

Testimony Re: House Bill 5828 Re: Commission Encouraging More Persons of Color to Enter the Field of Education
House Education Committee
March 24, 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 5828** which would extend the reporting and expiration dates of the Special Legislative Commission to Study and Provide Recommendations for Encouraging more Persons of Color to Enter the Field of Education to June 17, 2022.

Closing unacceptable, wide, and persistent gaps for students of color, low-income students, students with disabilities, and Multilingual Learners must be Rhode Island’s most urgent educational priority. Supporting the recruitment and retention of a diverse pool of educators is an important step in addressing these gaps.

Rhode Island’s student population is increasingly diverse, yet only a small fraction of Rhode Island teachers are teachers of color.



Source: Rhode Island Department of Education, State Report Card, 2018-2019 school year.

In October 2018, 89% (12,367) of Rhode Island public school educators identified as White, 3% (454) as Hispanic, 2% (249) as Black, 1% (120) as Asian/Pacific Islander, 1% (85) as Multi-Racial, and less than 1% (25) as Native American. Educators of color benefit all students, especially students of color. Students of color demonstrate long-term academic achievement including higher reading and math test scores, decreased likelihood of dropping out of high school, increased likelihood of going to college, and increased social and emotional development in classes with teachers of color.

In recent years, Rhode Island has taken a number of steps to ensure that all children have access to the kind of high-quality education they need to succeed in school, career, and life. These key steps included instituting an education funding formula that is based on five key principles – equity, adequacy, predictability, accountability, and efficiency and later improving this funding formula to provide additional funds to support the additional needs of Multilingual/English Learners, although more support is needed in this area. Another key step was developing a Basic Education Plan (BEP) that outlines the rights of every student in the Rhode Island public education system and sets basic standards to help ensure that high-quality education is available to all public school students, regardless of where they live or go to school.

Even after these important steps, we know that there are still inequities. Rhode Island needs to encourage more people of color to pursue careers in education and support them to ensure that they stay in the field of education. Encouraging more people of color to enter education can increase cultural competencies, reduce significant disparities in suspension rates, and decrease barriers between parents, communities, and schools.

We thank Representative Alzate and members of the Legislative Commission to Study and Provide Recommendations for Encouraging More People of Color To Enter the Field of Education for your leadership in addressing this critical need.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.