



RHODE ISLAND KIDS COUNT

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Testimony Re: Senate Bill 462 Re: College Crusade Scholarship
Senate Education Committee
March 17, 2021
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Madam Chair 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 Senate Bill 462.** This bill would exclude scholarships from the College Crusade of Rhode Island as federal or financial aid for the Rhode Island Promise Scholarship and would allow the program access to student-level data.

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 permanent while also excluding College Crusade scholarships from the financial aid consideration for RI Promise would increase the affordability of college for many low-income and first-generation college students.

The College Crusade serves 4,200 students each year. All of these students (100%) are low-income students and 95% are students of color. Graduates of the College Crusade are more likely to enroll in higher education immediately after graduation from high school compared to their peers. This bill would allow students participating in the College Crusade to get the full benefits of the RI Promise Scholarship and to utilize the funds from the College Crusade scholarship to purchase other costly expenses such as books, laptops, and food.

The COVID-19 pandemic is expected to impact economic mobility and have devastating long-lasting effects on children in poverty. Black and Hispanic households are projected to face the greatest increase in poverty, and racial and ethnic disparities may be exacerbated. It is critical to continue efforts to increase college enrollment and completion among these groups so we do not lose equity gains.

Rhode Island KIDS COUNT supports Senate Bill 462 which would make the RI Promise Scholarship more equitable by addressing a major barrier for low-income students, paying for living expenses, by not considering the College Crusade Scholarship as part of a student's financial aid package and allowing these funds to help students pay for food, books, laptops, and other expenses.

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 testify today.