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**Testimony Re: S-2142, Early Care and Education Workforce Data Act**

**House Education Committee**

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Rhode Island KIDS COUNT coordinates the Right from the Start Campaign, a state policy coalition led by eight organizations to advance state policies and budget priorities that help babies and young children get off to the right start.

**Both Rhode Island KIDS COUNT and the Right from the Start Campaign strongly support** passage of Senator Cano’s Early Care Education Workforce Data Act, S-2142 which would **codify** the previously funded Rhode Island early care and education workforce registry data system in the general laws, require that the data system meets national standards, and provide a deadline for implementation. It also directs the department of human services to produce annual reports on the status of both the registry data system and the early care and education workforce.

High-quality early childhood programs have consistent, **effective educators to support early child development and learning**. Low wages and unstable staffing create great challenges in delivering high-quality services to children and families and limits family access to services they need.

Until February 2024, Rhode Island was listed as one of only eight states that did not have a functioning early care and education registry according to the [National Workforce Registry Alliance](#).

Rhode Island has been building a workforce data system with the \$1 million in ARPA funding allocated in the FY23 budget. In February, DHS launched the new early care and education workforce registry data system, known as RISES or RI Start Early System.

This is our second chance and second major investment to create a statewide early care and education workforce data system. From 2012-2016, Rhode Island had a \$50 million Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge grant and spent millions working to create a comprehensive Early Care and Education Data System (ECEDS). A workforce data system was launched and [one report on the Rhode Island early care and education workforce was produced in 2016 before the data system was abandoned](#).

Establishing an Early Care and Education Workforce Registry Data System in statute (following up on funding allocated in the FY23 budget) is a **critical piece of infrastructure** needed for a healthy and high-quality early care and education system. Registries are used to share information

and opportunities directly with early educators, understand and address the needs of this essential workforce, and track improvements in staff recruitment, retention, and turnover over time.

**Children and families pay the cost when we do not have a healthy, stable, and high-quality early care and education system.** Data about the early care and education workforce will help policymakers make strategic decisions about resources to strengthen the early educator workforce to help expand access to high-quality child care and early learning programs.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.