



**Testimony Re: H-7908 – Department of Human Services – BrightStars QRIS Methodology**

**House Education Committee**

**March 17, 2026**

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**Rhode Island KIDS COUNT opposes passage of H-7908 that would change the state’s methodology for determining quality ratings of early care and education programs.**

Specifically, the bill would require the state to determine ratings based on an average of standards (rather than the building blocks method currently used) and may be requiring the state to automatically grant a five-star rating to child care programs have a national accreditation.

[Almost every state in the country has a child care Quality Rating and Improvement System \(QRIS\)](#) designed to assess, improve, and communicate about the quality of child care and early learning programs. Rhode Island’s QRIS, known as BrightStars, was launched in 2009 after 4 years of community engagement and field testing. The quality frameworks are updated periodically in response to stakeholder feedback and national best practices.

Generally, state QRIS use either a “building block” method, a “points” method, or a “hybrid” method combining building blocks and points to determine an aggregate quality score. Rhode Island and many other states use a “building block” method which assigns easier standards to the lower levels and harder standards to the higher levels of quality ratings, requiring programs to meet all the lower-level standards to move up to higher levels. Some other states use a “points” method and assign more points to the more difficult standards and less points to the easier standards with higher ratings requiring more points.

Based on the [most recent national information](#) available, 20 states use the “building block” method, 7 use the “points” method, 17 use a “hybrid” method (combining blocks and points). **No state in the U.S. determines a rating based on an average of standards.**

**There are only two state QRIS in the U.S. that award automatic 5-star ratings to accredited programs** and one of these has very specific criteria recognizing only NAEYC accreditation.

After many years of discussion, research, and review, **Rhode Island’s QRIS recognizes certain specific accreditations as meeting a specific structural standard of quality in the building block model** (such as having a curriculum or having family communication strategies) **but does not automatically award a high overall rating to accredited programs.** In particular, accredited programs must document staff qualification standards at each level and must achieve specific target scores on valid and reliable

program observations that assess quality of the child's experience in the program (or process quality).

We recognized that child care programs statewide are struggling to operate, to recruit and retain staff, and to meet quality standards because the state does not pay Child Care Assistance Program rates that cover the cost of quality or meet the federal equal access standard and very few families who pay private tuition can afford to pay higher fees. **We need to ensure more public funding is available to support child care programs operating costs so they can meet research-based quality standards.**

Eary care and school-age care programs in Rhode Island have several options to request help or changes to the BrightStars system, including:

- Request help directly from BrightStars to review strengths and challenges and develop a quality improvement plan to meet quality standards.
- Programs that are not satisfied with their BrightStars rating may [appeal their overall star rating within 30 days](#).
- Programs can propose a global change to BrightStars standards or criteria by submitting a written proposal to the RIAEYC Executive Director.
- Appeals of ratings and proposals to change criteria are reviewed by state partners and presented to the BrightStars Steering Committee and/or the BrightStars Advisory Committee.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.