



Testimony Re: House Resolution 8244, Resolution Creating a Special Legislative Commission to Study the Disparate Impact of Disciplinary Policies on Students

House Education Committee

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Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. We would also like to thank Representative Biah for sponsoring this resolution and Representatives Chippendale, McNamara, Solomon, Hull, Read, Donovan, Boylan, Speakman, and Hopkins for co-sponsoring. Rhode Island KIDS COUNT would like to voice its support for House Resolution 8244 which would create a 12-member special legislative commission to make a comprehensive study evaluating the impact on family and school performance in relation to current disciplinary policies in public schools and provide recommendations.

Effective school disciplinary practices promote a safe and respectful school climate, support learning, and address the root causes of student misbehavior. Over the past several years, the General Assembly has passed a number of school discipline related bills that we have supported:

- In 2012, the General Assembly passed legislation that prohibited schools from using a student's absenteeism as the sole basis for an out-of-school suspension.
- In 2016, the General Assembly passed legislation that requires school districts to evaluate the discipline data they already collect annually, identify any racial, ethnic, or special education disparities, develop a plan to reduce any disparities, and restricts the use of out-of-school suspensions to situations when a child's behavior represents a demonstrable threat to students, teachers, or administrators or causes a serious disruption and the student has failed to respond to corrective and rehabilitative measures.
- In 2022, the General Assembly passed legislation that requires that the RI Department of Education in coordination with the Attorney General's office to collect and publicly report the number of school resource officers (SROs) in each district and disaggregated data on student arrests, the use of force against students, and referrals to law enforcement or courts.

Rhode Island KIDS COUNT leads the Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI) Steering Committee, and for the past few years this committee has been examining drivers and solutions to the school-to-prison-pipeline. At Rhode Island KIDS COUNT we continue to produce data regarding school discipline and disparities in school discipline in both our annual Factbook and in other publications. We appreciate being included on the special legislative commission to study the impact of disciplinary policies in public schools and

would be happy to serve on this commission. We also appreciate and support the inclusion of student voice on this commission and would encourage the addition of a parent of a student in Rhode Island public schools as well. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.