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**Testimony Re: H-5745-An Act Relating To Education -- Council On
Postsecondary Education -- Student Success Act**

House Finance Committee

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Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. Rhode Island KIDS COUNT strongly supports House Bill 5745 and thanks Representative Diaz for sponsoring and Representatives Giraldo, Biah, Morales, Slater, Felix, Tanzi, Hull, J. Lombardi, and Batista for co-sponsoring. This bill would lower the residency requirement for nonimmigrant foreign national students to qualify for in-state tuition in Rhode Island from three years to six months.

This bill takes a meaningful step toward equity by reducing the time that a nonimmigrant foreign national student must live in Rhode Island. For many students and families, this change will open the door to college access that otherwise might remain closed.

The impact is significant. The tuition difference between in-state and out-of-state students is substantial:

- At URI, the difference is over **\$20,000 per year**.
- At RIC, it's nearly **\$8,000 per year**.
- And at CCRI, students save almost **\$5,000 annually**.

For many families especially immigrant, first-generation, and multilingual households this financial barrier is simply too high. Reducing it can make the difference between enrolling in college or putting their dreams on hold.

According to the Rhode Island Office of Management and Budget, the projected fiscal impact was **\$0 in FY2025**, and just over **\$500,000 in FY2026** a small investment for a long-term gain in economic mobility and educational equity.

This bill also reflects the lived realities of many Rhode Island families, **29% of children in Rhode Island live in immigrant families**, and **17% speak Spanish at home**, with many more speaking other languages.

By making in-state tuition more accessible, H-5745 helps ensure that more students can afford to pursue higher education, strengthen our local workforce, and contribute to our state's economy. Removing this barrier reflects Rhode Island's commitment to fairness, opportunity, and supporting all our young people in achieving their dreams.

Improving educational opportunities for youth is growing more important every year. Students who see a clear path forward toward higher education and a career perform better in school and are more likely to stay in school and graduate with their classmates. Youth without a college education have an increasingly difficult time entering the labor force and earning sufficient wages to support their families. Undereducated youth are also at risk of being unemployed or underemployed and becoming the next generation of poor families in the state.

We urge the Committee to support this bill and help us build a more inclusive and equitable Rhode Island.