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**Testimony Re: ARPA Proposals in Article 1- Section 16 Related to
Municipal Learning Centers
House Finance Committee
February 17, 2022
Paige Clausius-Parks, Senior Policy Analyst**

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today. Rhode Island KIDS COUNT would like to share information related to Article 1, Section 16 which would allocate \$15 million from *American Rescue Plan Act* funding from FY 2023 through 2027 to establish 11 centers operated by municipalities to provide early learning and out-of-school time programming.

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 will help families with young children; and is a member of the Executive Committee of the Rhode Island Afterschool Network (RIAN), a network of individuals and organizations that promote young people's safety, healthy development and learning outside the traditional classroom.

Currently, the state manages two systems to provide access to afterschool and summer programs. One of these systems is managed by the Rhode Island Department of Education to invest federal 21st Century Community Learning Center funds and served approximately 10,400 children ages 4 to 18 during the school year and 2,300 children ages 4 to 18 during the summer before the pandemic. The other system is managed by the Rhode Island Department of Human Services which provides child care subsidies to school-age children to attend afterschool and summer programs.

In most communities there are not enough high-quality, affordable afterschool and summer programs to serve all the children who could benefit from them. Resources are needed to expand access. In Rhode Island, the Rhode Island Afterschool Network (a United Way of Rhode Island program) act as an intermediary to address access issues and support program quality improvement.

State investments are needed to expand access to high-quality out-of-school time, afterschool and summer programs, and child care, and to build and sustain an effective workforce. It is important that these investments are used in ways that do not duplicate existing systems and do not compromise current efforts to improve and monitor program quality.

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Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.