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Testimony Re: H-5850 – Commercial Insurance Coverage for KIDS CONNECT program

House Health & Human Services Committee

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Leanne Barrett, Director of Early Childhood Policy & Strategy

Rhode Island KIDS COUNT supports Rep. Shallcross Smith's bill, H-5850, to allow KIDS CONNECT child care programs to bill commercial insurance providers for services to help children with special health care needs participate in daily routines, activities, and learning opportunities in licensed child care centers.

KIDS CONNECT is a Medicaid-funded program in Rhode Island that is managed by the Executive Office of Health and Human Services. Funds are used to add an additional staff member to a child care classroom so that children with special needs can participate, play, and learn along with their typically-developing peers.

Families rely on child care to enable them to work and to provide early education experiences. **Parents of children with disabilities and behavior challenges often have very limited options for child care** because their children need extra support and more individualized attention to be healthy and happy in group settings.

Thank you for considering legislation which would help working parents and bring much needed resources to help child care programs meet the needs of children with developmental delays, disabilities, and behavior challenges.