



Testimony Re: H-7952 Relating to the Permanent Legislative Commission on Child Care in Rhode Island

House Health & Human Services Committee

March 30, 2026

Leanne Barrett, Director of Early Childhood Policy & Strategy

Rhode Island KIDS COUNT strongly supports the Joint Resolution updating the membership and purpose of the Permanent Legislative Commission on Child Care (H-7925) and providing the Commission with a budget for planning expenses.

I believe I am currently the longest serving individual on the Permanent Legislative Commission on Child Care, having served as a representative from United Way of Rhode Island starting in 2000 and then continuing as a representative of Rhode Island KIDS COUNT starting in 2004. I am sure I have been to over 150 meetings of the Child Care Commission over the years.

The Commission plays an important role in efforts to improve policies and state systems that help working parents and that provide high-quality early learning opportunities to young children and high-quality afterschool and summer learning opportunities to school-age children during the hours when they are not in school, but parents are working.

We very much support the update in membership and are excited to work with an expanded group of state legislators on the Commission as we work to improve children's access to high-quality child care and early learning opportunities statewide.

We also strongly support the update in the mission of the Commission to specifically include early childhood education. We have always discussed Head Start and Pre-K policy at Commission meetings and this helps strengthen our work to ensure that child care and early education policy are coordinated and integrated.

Rhode Island KIDS COUNT thanks the General Assembly for your leadership in establishing a Permanent Commission on Child Care in 1989 and the devotion of Chairwoman Grace Diaz over the last 21 years to ensure we continue to make progress. We are delighted to work with Senator DiMario as the Commission co-chair along with a growing group of state legislators who are fighting to help families and children. We urge passage of this joint resolution.