

Budgetary & Legislative Priorities 2024

Health

- Adopt continuous Medicaid coverage for children under age 6.*
- Provide funding to sustain Mobile Response Stabilization Services to support mental health.

Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice

- Provide financial support to youth aging out of foster care by increasing funding for the higher education incentive grant and establishing a tuition waiver program.
- Stop charging parents for costs associated with their child being in foster care.
- Prohibit the questioning of a juvenile suspected of delinquent or criminal behavior unless the parent or guardian is present.
- Prohibit the incarceration of children under the age of 14 for any offense other than murder, first degree sexual assault, or an attempt to commit such offenses.

Education

- Increase access to mental health supports in schools.
- Increase the amount and predictability of funding for Multilingual Learners in the school funding formula and create a dual language program fund to be administered by RIDE.
- Reduce the use of suspensions by providing alternative programs and student support.
- Make the student representative on the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education a voting member.

Economic Well-Being

- Improve the RI Works Program by updating the cash assistance benefit annually, repealing the full family sanction, and restoring eligibility to legal permanent residents.*
- Increase the State Earned Income Tax Credit.*

Early Childhood Development*

- Solve the early educator staffing crisis.
- Expand and strengthen the RI Childcare Assistance Program.
- Expand RI Pre-K equitably in Birth-Five context.
- Sustain and strengthen Early Head Start and Head Start.
- End waiting lists for Early Intervention.
- Establish an Early Childhood IDEA B-5 Task Force.
- Meet maternal and young children's mental health needs.
- Save First Connections newborn family home visiting.
- Improve paid family leave.
- Raise more state general revenue for child care/early learning.

Rhode Island KIDS COUNT also strongly supports:

- Healthy School Meals for All
- Commonsense gun safety laws, including an assault weapon ban and safe storage laws
- Increasing access to affordable high-quality Out-Of-School Time programs.
- Increasing the percentage of Educators of Color
- Increasing equitable access to college and career readiness opportunities
- Amend the Rhode Island Constitution so all Rhode Islanders must be provided with an education that is adequate and that this right is judicially enforceable.
- Eliminating payday lending
- Expanding the use of Equity Impact Statements in budget and legislative proposals.
- Expanding the supply of safe, healthy, and affordable homes.