



Parents Leading for Educational Equity
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House Committee on Education

From: Parents Leading for Educational Equity

Re: Testimony in Strong Support for Testimony in Support of the Rhode Island Early Care and Education Workforce Data Act H7291

Date: February 7, 2024

Greetings members of the House Committee on Education, my name is Ramona Santos Torres, I am the executive director of [Parents Leading for Educational Equity](https://pleeri.org) (PLEE) and a member of the steering committee for the Right from the Start Campaign. We are a grassroots, family advocacy organization fighting for equitable systems of care for families and children. On behalf of PLEE and the parents we represent, I want to express the **support** for house bill H7291. As a family serving organization, we are deeply invested in the well-being and development of our state's early education and afterschool system. We believe that the implementation of H7291 is a crucial step forward in ensuring the quality and effectiveness of our early educational programs.

The legislative findings presented in Section 16-114-2 underscore the pivotal role played by front-line educators in licensed child care and early learning programs. Recognizing them as the backbone of Rhode Island's early education and afterschool system is not only commendable but emphasizes the importance of having consistent and accurate data about this workforce. I wholeheartedly agree with the identified need for such data to better support professional development, inform policy decisions, and evaluate the impact of strategic investments.

The allocation of one million dollars from the American Rescue Plan Act in 2022 to establish a statewide early care and education workforce registry data system is a testament to the state's commitment to addressing this crucial need. The acknowledgment that, as of 2023, Rhode Island was one of only eight states without a functioning early care and education workforce registry further underscores the urgency of passing this legislation. The provisions outlined in Section 16-114-3 regarding the establishment of the Rhode Island early care and education workforce registry data system are well-thought-out and align with the recommended guidelines of the National Workforce Registry Alliance. The registry's emphasis on direct communication with front-line child care and early educators, along with the collection of key demographic and turnover data, is essential for the effective functioning of the system. The commitment to producing an annual report on the status of the early care and education registry,

including detailed characteristics of the workforce, is commendable. The transparency in sharing this information with the general assembly, the children's cabinet, licensed child care centers, family child care homes, and the public through the department's website reflects a commitment to accountability and openness.

In conclusion, We urge the House Committee on Education to support and pass the Rhode Island Early Care and Education Workforce Data Act H7291. This legislation will not only address the current gap in our state's early care and education workforce data but will also contribute significantly to the enhancement of professional development opportunities and the overall improvement of our early education and afterschool system.

Thank you for your attention to this matter and for your commitment to the well-being of Rhode Island's children and educators.

Sincerely,

Ramona Santos Torres
Executive Director