



RHODE ISLAND KIDS COUNT

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Testimony Re: House Resolution 5010 Regarding the Rules of the House of Representatives – Equity Impact Statements
House Committee on Rules
January 15, 2025
Paige Parks, Executive Director

Madam Chair and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today. Rhode Island KIDS COUNT supports House Resolution 5010. We would like to thank Representative Morales for introducing this resolution and Representatives Stewart, Alzate, Batista, Potter, Giraldo, Cotter, Speakman, and Sanchez for co-sponsoring. This resolution would amend the House rules to authorize the Speaker and the Rhode Island Black, Latino, Indigenous, Asian American and Pacific Islander (RIBLIA) Caucus to request equity impact statements on up to five proposed bills.

There are persistent, widespread, and unacceptable disparities in the health, safety, education, and economic well-being of children and youth by race, ethnicity, immigration status, sex, sexual orientation, gender identify, disability, and other factors. We present data on many of these disparities in our annual *Rhode Island KIDS COUNT Factbook* and other publications to raise awareness about disparities, increase understanding about the root causes of these disparities, and identify the policies Rhode Island should put in place to reduce and eliminate these disparities. Here are a few examples of the data we present:

Health Outcomes, by Race and Ethnicity, Rhode Island

	ALL RACES	AMERICAN INDIAN/ ALASKA NATIVE	ASIAN	BLACK	HISPANIC	NATIVE HAWAIIAN/ OTHER PACIFIC ISLANDER	WHITE
Children Without Health Insurance	2.1%	NA	8.1%	4.0%	2.4%	NA	0.8%
Women with Delayed or No Prenatal Care	15.8%	26.0%	16.3%	21.7%	18.2%	*	12.9%
Low Birthweight Infants	7.7%	8.5%	8.9%	11.4%	8.3%	*	6.6%
Infant Mortality (per 1,000 live births)	4.6	*	*	8.1	6.7	0.0	2.7
Any Infant Breastfeeding	76%	65%	82%	69%	70%	73%	79%
Combined Overweight and Obesity	37%	NA	NA	44%	49%	NA	32%

In the health arena, recent legislation that has furthered the state’s equity goals have been expanding RIte Care coverage to cover all income-eligible children, regardless of immigration status, extending postpartum RIte Care coverage to cover mothers for 12 months postpartum and providing this coverage regardless of immigration status, and making doula services eligible for reimbursement through public and private insurance.

Education Outcomes, by Race and Ethnicity, Rhode Island

	ALL RACES	ASIAN*	BLACK	HISPANIC	NATIVE AMERICAN	WHITE
3rd Grade Students Meeting Expectations in Reading	37%	54%	20%	21%	9%	48%
3rd Grade Students Meeting Expectations in Math	35%	56%	19%	20%	10%	45%
Four-Year High School Graduation Rates	84%	92%	82%	77%	74%	88%
Immediate College Enrollment Rates	65%	71%	61%	55%	60%	71%
% of Adults Over Age 25 With a Bachelor's Degree or Higher	36%	54%	25%	10%	17%	33%

Rhode Island has also made progress in the education arena by improving the education funding formula to better support the needs of Multilingual Learners. However, we still have far to go.

The mission of Rhode Island KIDS COUNT is to improve the health, safety, education, economic well-being, and development of Rhode Island's children with a commitment to equity and the elimination of unacceptable disparities by race, ethnicity, disability, zip code, immigration status, neighborhood, and income, so this legislation is deeply connected both to our ongoing work and to our mission.

We urge this committee to consider how equity impact statements could help this body evaluate legislation and serve as a tool for increasing equity and decreasing longstanding historical disparities by race, ethnicity, gender, age, disability, or other status. Equity impact statements could:

- **Prevent harm:** Even well-intended laws can have unintended negative consequences. Without a focus on equity, well-meaning policies can reinforce disparities. An equity impact statement could assess and correct inequities before they become incorporated into law.
- **Promote informed decision-making** by ensuring that proposed legislation is evaluated through an equity lens. This will help legislators to make more informed decisions that consider the full range of their constituents' needs.
- **Improve transparency** by showing the public how decisions are likely to affect them, which strengthens the democratic process and empowers communities.
- **Raise awareness** by bringing attention to existing disparities and spurring more comprehensive discussions about how everyone should have the same chance to succeed in Rhode Island.

Nine states -- Colorado, Connecticut, Florida, Iowa, Maryland, Minnesota, New Jersey, Oregon, and Virginia -- have already passed legislation that supports using impact statements to assess equity. **We urge you to support this resolution so Rhode Island can join the growing number of states to implement equity impact statements.** We stand ready to support these efforts in whatever way we can.

Thank you for the work you do to ensure that Rhode Island has policies in place that ensure that all children and youth can develop, thrive, and succeed, and thank you for the opportunity to testify today.