



Public Testimony
House Finance Committee
Re: RIDE Budget
April 12, 2016

Submitted by The Rhode Island Interfaith Coalition to Reduce Poverty

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The Rhode Island Interfaith Coalition to Reduce Poverty is a coalition of diverse religious communities and advocacy partners throughout the state who have come together to fight poverty.

We are submitting testimony today to voice our organization's support for expanded access to both early education and adult education (workforce foundational skills and occupational training).

We believe that education is the most essential pathway out of poverty. Rhode Islanders' access to education should start early and continue for a lifetime. From the vital work of state Pre-K programs through to the equally essential provision of workforce foundational skills and occupational training, the Rhode Island Department of Education provides an essential support to our communities.

For many adults living in poverty, supplemental education can provide a vital gateway to better-paying jobs and more-satisfying career paths. As we look towards Rhode Island's future, workforce development is necessary to create a fully-thriving state economy. People with a high school diploma earn about 30 percent more than the earnings of people without a diploma. We urge continued and expanded funding support to provide strong adult job training and to end the waitlist for adult education including ESOL and basic skills training.

Simultaneously, continuing to expand funding and support for state pre-Kindergarten programs demonstrates a recognition that our investment in Rhode Island must include our youngest residents if our interventions are to have the greatest impact. The positive, long-term benefits of early education, especially for children living in poverty, is well-known to both researchers and families. We urge continued and expanded funding support for pre-K, as well.

Thank you for your time and for your public service.