

GENERAL ASSEMBLY TESTIMONY

LATINO
POLICY INSTITUTE

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Testimony in Support of S-2187 -- Cover All Kids

On behalf of the Latino Policy Institute at Roger Williams University, we strongly support the passage of the Cover All Kids bill (S-2187).

In 1996, after federal restrictions on the eligibility of non-citizens to receive a range of healthcare and basic-need benefits were imposed, RI began using state-only funds to provide health insurance coverage for low-income noncitizen children, including undocumented children. However, between 2006 and 2008, the General Assembly repealed coverage for children not eligible for federal funding. While coverage was restored for lawfully present children once federal funding was restored, coverage for all our children – including those who are undocumented - was not put in place. This leaves hundreds of children all over our state without basic healthcare access, even during a pandemic. We believe that continued inaction, under these circumstances, is a choice with fiscal and moral implications.

Children who do not have access to preventative care are more likely to end up in the emergency room, meaning that healthcare costs are often exacerbated. Under federal Medicaid law, the state is required to pay for this emergency care for income-eligible children regardless of their immigration status. By providing access to primary and preventive care for undocumented children, our state avoids paying the far higher costs of preventable healthcare emergencies.

We firmly believe that healthcare is a human right, and all children, regardless of their immigration status, deserve healthcare. Guaranteeing that every child has access to basic health coverage, by enacting the “Cover All Kids” bill, is the most just and fiscally prudent course of action for RI. The passage of this legislation will be a pivotal step in ensuring that all of Rhode Island’s children receive the care they deserve.

Marcela Betancur
Executive Director
Latino Policy Institute