
The

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Support Rule of 90 – Pension Eligibility

The RIFTHP offered testimony on legislation to improve the pension plan for active teachers, state workers and municipal workers is legislation called the Rule of 90. [S 86](#) by Senator Ciccone was heard in the Senate Finance Committee on May 30. RIFTHP President Frank Flynn submitted a [letter](#) of support and lobbyist James Parisi testified in support of the legislation. Also testifying in support of the bill was Mary Barden of the NEA/RI, Jim Cenerini of AFSCME Council 94 and Pat Crowley representing the RI AFL-CIO.

The normal retirement age is now a person's social security age (age 67 for most employees). Since 2015, employees can retire if their age plus years of service equals 95, with a minimum age of 62. This is known as the Rule of 95. Legislation has been introduced to change the Rule of 95 to a Rule of 90, where a person age 60 with at least 30 years of service can retire without penalty.

[Click here](#) to view a one-page fact sheet on the legislation.

[Click here](#) to email your Senator and Representative. We encourage you to email your Senator and Representative right away as Please consider sending the email even if the rule of 90 does not affect you or if you are decades away from retirement. After years of pension cuts, we must all work together to make public employee pensions better.

Vision Services Funding

On Tuesday, May 30, the Senate Finance Committee heard testimony on [S 984](#) by Senator Lawson. The bill would allocate \$3 million for the Rhode Island Vision Services Program (RIVESP). The RIFTHP represents the state-employed teachers in the program which is housed at the Sherlock Center at Rhode Island College. The bill is identical to legislation by Representative Casimiro heard the previous week.

RIFTHP President Frank Flynn submitted a [letter](#) of support for the appropriation. James Parisi testified in support of the bill at the hearing. He thanked legislative leaders for preserving the RIVESP program and testified about the importance of the program and the necessity for state funding, similar to the system of funding the school for the Deaf. The Committee voted to hold the bill for further Study.

Charter School Enrollment Cap

Legislation submitted by the late Senator Maryellen Goodwin to cap the amount of money each public school district is required to pay for charter school tuition payments. [S 762](#) was heard in the Senate Education committee on Wednesday, May 30. The bill would cap charter tuition payments at 9% per school district or 23% if the district was under state control. The districts already exceeding the cap would freeze charter expansion at current levels.

RIFTHP lobbyist James Parisi testified in support of the bill. He commented on the disruption experienced by public school districts caused by excessive charter expansion as a problem that merits Assembly action. He testified that the education status quo for 25 years has been charter expansion, and the policy has failed to improve the public education system. He cited recent Providence school closures of neighborhood schools as being caused by charter school expansion. He testified that Central Falls already has over 40% of its students attending charter schools and Providence is almost 30%. He cited lack of resources for special needs children, re-segregation of public schools, and reduced electives in secondary schools as problems caused by not having a cap on charter school tuition payments by school district. The Committee voted to hold the bill for further study.

Bills on the Move

The following bills have passed the Rhode Island House of Representatives and are awaiting action by the Senate.

School Social Worker/Psychologist Medicaid Reimbursement

[H 5010-aa](#), which was introduced by Representative McNamara, passed the 4/18/2023 with a vote of 66 yeas, 2 nays, and 7 members not voting.

This bill would require that services provided by school social workers and certified school psychologists be included as health care related services eligible for federal Medicaid reimbursement.

Curriculum Materials - Science and Technology - Extension

[H 5167](#), which was introduced by Representative McNamara, passed the House on 5/16/2023 with a vote of 67 yeas, 1 nays, and 7 members not voting.

This bill would extend the date to June 30, 2027 for local education agencies to select identified high quality curricula and materials for science and technology. It would also require the Department of Education to establish competencies for utilizing high quality curriculum materials by June 2023.

Fast Track Principal Certification - Program Standards

[H 5168](#), which was introduced by Representative McNamara, passed the House on 5/16/2023 with a vote of 70 yeas, 0 nays, and 5 members not voting.

This bill would revise the fast-track principal certification program and require a course in program evaluation (including data analysis) instead of a course in supervision of school personnel. This bill would also provide that participants who have earned a principal certification by fulfilling all of the requirements and completing courses offered by RIDE, would instead complete an additional course on program evaluation (including data analysis) in lieu of the department approved leadership program to build leadership skills that support teaching and learning.

Extension - Education Governance Study Commission

[HR 5169](#), which was introduced by Representative McNamara, passed the House on 3/7/2023 with a vote of 69 yeas, 0 nays, and 6 members not voting.

This resolution would extend the reporting and expiration dates of the commission to study the governance structure of Rhode Island's Public Education System, from March 1, 2023, 3 to March 1, 2024, and would expire on July 1, 2024.

Teacher/Staff/Student Bereavement

[H 5222-A](#), which was introduced by Representative Casimiro, passed the House on 6/1/2023 with a vote of 66 yeas, 0 nays, and 9 members not voting.

This bill requires RIDE to develop protocols in the event of the death of a student, teacher, or staff in a school.

Virtual Learning Study Commission Extension

[H 5223-aa](#), which was introduced by Representative Casimiro, passed the House on 2/14/2023 with a vote of 70 yeas, 0 nays, and 5 members not voting.

This bill would extend the reporting and expiration dates of the commission to study the effects and impact of hybrid and virtual learning during the pandemic, from July 31, 2023 to September 15, 2023.

Early Childhood Education Regulations

[H 5339-aa](#), which was introduced by Representative Donovan, passed the House on 4/6/2023 with a vote of 61 yeas, 1 nays, and 13 members not voting.

This bill would amend the applicability of the chapter on education services to very young children, to children aged three (3) to five (5) years of age and would require that, effective July 1, 2025, persons operating schools must maintain a rating through the quality rating and improvement system to be permitted to establish or maintain any school and would repeal several sections of law relative to the revocation of approval to operate a school.

UCAP Board of Trustees

[H 5423-A](#), which was introduced by Representative Lombardi, passed the House on 5/18/2023 with a vote of 72 yeas, 0 nays, and 3 members not voting.

This bill would amend the composition of the Urban Collaborative and provide that the collaborative be governed by a board of trustees, comprised of five (5) members, one of which shall be the Superintendent of Providence Public Schools.

Kindergarten Age of Eligibility

[H 5544](#), which was introduced by Representative Donovan, passed the House on 4/6/2023 with a vote of 63 yeas, 0 nays, and 12 members not voting.

This bill would amend the provisions of law relative to eligibility for attendance for kindergarten students.

Charter School Financial Reports

[H 5545](#), which was introduced by Representative Voas, passed the House on 4/4/2023 with a vote of 72 yeas, 0 nays, and 3 members not voting.

This bill would require that certain quarterly reports required to be filed by district charter schools, mayoral academies and independent charter schools be submitted to the Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education instead of the Department of Revenue.

Student Computer Device Privacy

[H 5561](#), which was introduced by Representative Speakman, passed the House on 4/18/2023 with a vote of 67 yeas, 0 nays, and 8 members not voting.

This bill would prohibit an educational institution or school district from accessing any audio or video recording, transmitting or recording function on a student's institutional or personal device or using location data for tracking a student's institutional device or personal device, or allow a third party to do so, except in limited circumstances.

Standard for Student Transportation

[H 5667](#), which was introduced by Representative Fogarty, passed the House on 5/18/2023 with a vote of 64 yeas, 8 nays, and 3 members not voting.

This bill would require the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education to adopt standards which take into consideration the time and cost of transporting students across municipal boundaries and to promote maximum efficiency in other programs that impact the education of students.

Special Education Advisory Committees

[H 5668](#), which was introduced by Representative Cortvriend, passed the House on 4/27/2023 with a vote of 74 yeas, 0 nays, and 1 members not voting.

This bill would require public school districts to take certain actions to promote notice and disseminate information regarding the district's special education local advisory committee.

SurveyWorks Data

[H 5741](#), which was introduced by Representative McNamara, passed the House on 5/2/2023 with a vote of 61 yeas, 9 nays, and 5 members not voting.

This bill would incorporate the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's SurveyWorks school climate indicators disaggregated by local education agencies ("LEAs") and individual public schools, or any other such future system used as a replacement or substitute for SurveyWorks to measure school climate indicators for evaluating the performance of LEAs and individual public schools.

Providence CBA Ratification

[H 5773](#), which was introduced by Representative Kislak, passed the House on 5/30/2023 with a vote of 69 yeas, 0 nays, and 6 members not voting.

This bill would require the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education to ratify any Collective Bargaining Agreement entered into on behalf of the Providence Public School District. The Providence Teachers' Union testified in support of the bill.

Taxation of Education Institutions and Hospitals

[H 5782-A](#), which was introduced by Representative Biah, passed the House on 5/25/2023 with a vote of 66 yeas, 2 nays, and 7 members not voting.

This bill would subject to taxation, real property owned by nonprofit institutions of higher education and nonprofit hospitals, but leased or occupied by for-profit persons and entities. This bill would also amend charters issued by the General Assembly to such nonprofit institutions and hospitals, and would take effect prospectively only, effective January 1, 2024.

Council On Elementary And Secondary Education Membership - Teacher of the Year

[H 6052-A](#), which was introduced by Representative Cortvriend, passed the House on 5/4/2023 with a vote of 67 yeas, 0 nays, and 8 members not voting.

This bill would add the Rhode Island Teacher Of The Year as an additional ex officio member of the council on Elementary and Secondary Education as well as the Board of Education. This bill would also provide that where the current Rhode Island Teacher of the year is unable or unwilling to serve on the Board of Education a former Rhode Island Teacher Of The Year would be selected to serve on the board by the Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education, as long as the individual is still teaching in Rhode Island Public Schools.

American Rescue Plan School Funding Report

[H 6128](#), which was introduced by Representative Edwards, passed the House on 4/25/2023 with a vote of 71 yeas, 1 nays, and 3 members not voting.

This bill would require every School District, local education agency, city and town to report each fiscal year relating to funding, administrative and program information from the American Rescue plan, Elementary and Secondary School emergency relief, and state and local recovery funds. The school district reports would be published on the Department of Education website and city and town reports on the Division of Municipal Finance website.

Study Commission Extension - Hybrid And Virtual Learning

[H 6254](#), which was introduced by Representative Casimiro, passed the House on 5/18/2023 with a vote of 71 yeas, 0 nays, and 4 members not voting.

This resolution would extend the reporting and expiration dates of the commission to study the effects and impact of hybrid and virtual learning during the pandemic, from July 31, 2024, to November 15, 2024, and would expire on November 29, 2024.

District Action Plans

[H 6272](#), which was introduced by Representative McNamara, passed the House on 5/16/2023 with a vote of 70 yeas, 0 nays, and 5 members not voting.

This bill would extend the due date for the district action plan each and every year from September 1 to December 1, and further require that there are no fewer than five (5) school district education reviews annually beginning in academic year 2024-2025.

Bill Introductions

Student Success Factor - MLL

([H 6346](#), Alzate, House Finance)

This bill amends the student success factor calculation of the state share ratio for foundation aid by accounting for English language in determining the state's share of foundation aid eligibility for each school district.

\$600,000 for Special Education Ombud

([H 6377](#), Carson, House Finance)

This resolution (IEP/504 SERVICE PROGRAM) authorizes the appropriation of the sum of \$600,000 for an independent State Ombudsman office to provide for a facilitated Individualized Education Program.

\$3,000,000 Funding - RIVESP

([H 6389](#), Casimiro, House Finance)

([S 984](#), Lawson, Senate Finance)

These resolutions (RIVESP) authorizes the appropriation of the sum of \$3,000,000 to Rhode Island College for the Rhode Island Vision Education and Services Program.

Public Employee Retirement Security

([H 6413](#), Edwards, House Finance)

This bill amends sections of law relating to retirement of various public employees and the calculation of their final average salary and service accruals.

House Study Commission - Safety Protocols For Rhode Island Schools

([HR 6422](#), Boylan, House Education)

This resolution creates a 21 member commission to evaluate and provide recommendations on mandated safety protocols for RI schools, and who would report back to the House by February 28, 2024, and expire on April 30, 2024.

Civics Education Categorical Funding

([H 6464](#), Speakman, House Finance)

This bill establishes a new categorical funding category for civics education.

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