

The SMITH HILL REPORT



PUBLISHED BY THE RHODE ISLAND FEDERATION OF TEACHERS & HEALTH PROFESSIONALS/AFT, AFL-CIO

February 27, 2023

Winter Recess

The Rhode Island General Assembly did not meet last week as their schedule includes a winter recess. There were no bill hearings last week on Smith Hill. The RIFTHP did attend several legislative meetings at the State House, including meetings about improving the state education aid formula and addressing the potential closure of the Northern Rhode Island Collaborative, whose staff are represented by the RIFTHP. There were approximately 400 bills introduced the prior week that were posted for review. The RIFTHP is already following over 200 bills introduced this session.

Bill Introductions

Duty to Report - Felony

([H 5358](#), Casimiro, House Judiciary)

This bill would require that any coach, teacher, school administrator, or person in a position of authority who knowingly fails to report known or suspected child abuse or neglect, sexual assault or battery involving a child or who knowingly fails to perform any other act required by law for the protection or safety of a child would be guilty of a felony, and upon conviction, would be subject to a fine of not less than five thousand dollars (\$5,000), nor more than ten thousand dollars (\$10,000), or to imprisonment for not more than five (5) years, or both.

Training School - Minimum Age

([H 5359](#), Kislak, House Judiciary)

([S 0344](#), Valverde, Senate Judiciary)

These bills would prohibit the family court from detaining any juvenile or committing any juvenile, under the age of fourteen (14) years, to the training school, for any offense other than murder, first degree sexual assault, or an attempt to commit such offenses, and the court determines that there is no other reasonable placement to ensure the safety of the juvenile and the general public.

State Deferred Compensation Plans - Municipal Employees

([H 5374](#), Casey, House Municipal Government)

([S 0228](#), Murray, Senate Finance)

These bills would provide that effective January 1, 2024, any participating municipality as defined in § 45-21-2 may elect to offer to its employees the deferred compensation plans offered by the state. The account of any municipal employee who participates in the state deferred compensation plan would be subject to the same administration, rules, and regulations as are applicable and applied to the accounts of employees in the state deferred compensation plan.

Education Aid - Reading and Math Specialists

([H 5389](#), Felix, House Finance)

([S 0069](#), Cano, Senate Education)

These bills would provide local education agencies (LEAs) hiring site-based specialists for reading and math to receive state reimbursement based on enrollment and specific guidelines.

Education Aid - School Social Workers

([H 5396](#), Kazarian, House Finance)

([S 0258](#), Sosnowski, Senate Finance)

These bills would require all public schools, in grades kindergarten through twelve (K-12), to have at least one full-time certified school social worker for every two hundred fifty (250) students and provide for an appropriation by the general assembly in the amount of two million dollars (\$2,000,000) in the budget for Fiscal Year 2024 to the various school districts and municipalities to employ additional social workers.

Human Service Provider - \$25 Minimum Wage

([H 5400](#), Shanley, House Finance)

([S 0248](#), DiPalma, Senate Finance)

These bills would require state contracted human services providers to pay their employees a starting hourly wage of no less than twenty-five dollars (\$25.00) per hour, and sets forth a schedule to include incremental raises for existing employees to be adjusted annually thereafter based on the rate of inflation.

State Employee Retiree COLA Restoration

([H 5404](#), Shanley, House Finance)

This bill would compensate pre-2011 retirees, and their beneficiaries, for the difference in benefits from 2011 to 2023 with a non-compounded one-time cost of living adjustment. This act would also restore the cost of living adjustment (COLA) to pre-2011 retirees, and their beneficiaries, for 2024 and every year thereafter.

Teacher Recruitment Report

([H 5421](#), Giraldo, House Education)

This bill would create a committee to generate a written report of concrete proposals to attract persons from diverse and traditionally under represented backgrounds to teach in Rhode Island public schools.

Elementary School Discipline Restrictions

([H 5422](#), Diaz, House Education)

([S 0189](#), Quezada, Senate Education)

These bills would authorize schools to issue an out-of-school suspension for students in grades six (6) and above, if they are found to be a threat to the physical safety or health of students, teachers, and administrators. This act would also authorize schools to issue an out-of-school suspension, on a case-by case basis, where a student has violated school regulations, including alcohol, illegal drugs or weapons. These bills would further provide that students in grades preschool through five (5) may be issued an

out-of-school suspension only after consultation with a school psychologist or mental health professional where it is determined that such student's behavior presents a threat to the physical safety of others and cannot be reduced through interventions.

DCYF Student Care Team

([H 5458](#), Casimiro, House Health & Human Services)

([S 0183](#), Kallman, Senate Education)

These bills would require that each child under the supervision of the Department of Children, Youth and Families be provided a team of educational advocates which would be required to attend meetings on a regular basis to ensure the child's educational planning, progress and success.

\$105,000 Funding to Implement Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation Training

([H 5480](#), Ackerman, House Finance)

([S 0238](#), Tikoian, Senate Finance)

These bills would authorize the appropriation of the sum of \$105,000 to the Rhode Department of Health to implement CPR in High Schools.

Elimination of State Licenses

([H 5492](#), Place, House Corporation)

This bill would establish procedures to ensure that agency regulations or public service restrictions do not unjustly restrict individuals from entering into businesses, professions or public services and that the regulations or restrictions achieve articulable, legitimate public health, safety and welfare objectives.

Elimination of Statewide Academic Standards

([H 5498](#), Place, House Education)

([S 0187](#), Morgan, Senate Education)

These bills would repeal in their entirety sections 16-22-30, 16-22-31, 16-22-32 and 16-22-33, all of which relate to the establishment of statewide academic standards in mathematics, English language arts, science and technology, history, social studies, world languages and the arts and their implementation into the curriculum of all public schools.

Anti-Bullying Bill Of Rights

([H 5499](#), O'Brien, House Education)

This bill would create the anti-bullying bill of rights act which would strengthen protection for students in schools who are victims of bullying. It would require more enhanced teacher and administrator training to better understand and combat the effects of bullying. It would provide for collaboration between the Department of Education, Attorney General and State Police to establish strict policies and procedures on how to handle a reported situation of bullying.

Elementary School AED Devices

([H 5500](#), Fenton-Fung, House Education)

This bill would require elementary schools to provide and maintain onsite functional automated external defibrillators (AEDs) in quantities and types, deemed by the Commissioner of Education in consultation with the Director of Health to be adequate for use in emergencies.

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