
The

SMITH HILL REPORT



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RIC AFT Testifies for More Higher Education Funding

The House Finance Committee heard testimony on the public higher education budget on Thursday, April 6th. The House Fiscal Office analyst presented background information on the higher education budget request by the Governor. You can view the 90 PowerPoint slides on the budget by [clicking here](#). RIC President Frank Sanchez testified at the committee hearing. RIC offers 90 majors, with education majors making up only 17% of the student population despite RIC having its origins as a teacher preparation program. 86% of RIC students are Rhode Islanders and 71% of RIC graduates live in or near Rhode Island. He explained the need for revenue to cover contractual pay increases as well as other strategic initiatives such as efforts to enhance RIC's student advising system.

RIC AFT President Quenby Hughes spoke to the committee about the need to increase state support for higher education. She is an Associate Professor of History and a RIC alumna. President Hughes called attention to the fact that Rhode Island is 45th in the country in measures of state support for public higher education. She noted that faculty salaries are not competitive. She offered testimony, on the amount of time RIC students spend off-campus working, to highlight the need for increased state aid through the Governor's tuition plan and the need for funding increases from the General Assembly.

Hughes testified: *"Like some of our facilities at the College, RIC faculty salaries are stagnating. Faculty at Rhode Island College make less than faculty at every single one of our peer institutions in New England, in many cases substantially: so just over the border in Connecticut, a full professor at one of the peer state colleges can expect to receive \$20,000 or 22% more starting salary than a professor at RIC. In Massachusetts, faculty salaries at peer institutions, already higher than our own at each rank, are growing by 3.5% year after year, in the same period of time that the faculty at RIC had no or little raises."*

You can view Quenby Hughes testimony by [clicking here](#).



Quenby Hughes, President, RIC Faculty Union

RIFTHP Supports DSP Wage Increase

There have been several opportunities this session to advocate for pay increases for Direct Support Professionals working with those with developmental disabilities. There are bills, budget articles and agency budget hearings where the issue arises. The RIFTHP used the opportunity of a bill hearing on [S0471](#) by Senator DiPalma in the Senate Finance Committee on Tuesday April 4, to advocate for DSP raises. RIFTHP lobbyist James Parisi offered testimony summarizing a fact sheet ([click here](#)) related to the recent history of DSP reimbursement rates. The State is still below the initial funding levels adopted in 2011. There was also testimony in support of the resolution by Emmanuel Falck of SEIU, Donna Martin on behalf of the CPNRI, the Community Provider Networks of Rhode Island (provider association), and Bob Marshall of the RI Developmental Disabilities Council.

Bill Introductions

Teacher and Municipal Worker Contract Continuation

[\(H5593\)](#) *Vella-Wilkinson, House Labor*

The RIFTHP supports this act which would require that the contractual provisions contained in an otherwise expired collective bargaining agreement with certified school teachers and municipal employees would continue until a successor agreement has been reached between the parties.

Student Discipline – Alternative Education Programs

[\(H5666\)](#) *Ranglin-Vassell, House Health Education and Welfare*

The RIFTHP supports this act which would require school districts to provide for alternative programs and classroom space, within the school, to reduce the number of out-of-school suspensions. Students

that pose a threat to a peer, teacher, administrator, support staff or themselves would be placed in an alternative educational setting within the school with a RIDE certified teacher.

State Pension Contribution – Maintenance of Effort

[\(H5746 Handy, House Finance\)](#)

The RIFTHP supports this act which would require the yearly state contribution to the pension system not be reduced until the fund ratio meets or exceeds eighty percent (80%).

Municipal Disability Retirement – Outside Income Reduction

[\(H5747 Morgan, House Finance\)](#)

The RIFTHP opposes this act which would require municipal and quasi-municipal entities to annually adjust the disability pensions of pension beneficiaries according to any compensation earned.

Public School Donation Tax Credit

[\(H5748 Solomon, House Finance\)](#)

The RIFTHP supports this act which would create a tax credit for any and all gifts, grants, and donations of money, equipment, supplies, materials, services and any other contribution of value, conditional or otherwise, from any person, firm, association foundation, corporation, or business entity for use in any program or facility in a public school.

Education Aid – Maintenance of Effort – Inflation

[\(H5749 Amore, House Finance\)](#)

[\(S0568 DiPalma, Senate Finance\)](#)

The RIFTHP supports this act which would amend the maintenance of effort provisions to require that local aid be determined by the amount of the previous year's aid, plus inflation or the local contribution.



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