



SMITH HILL REPORT

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Charter School Cap

On Wednesday, March 10, the RIFTHP testified before the Senate Education Committee in **support** of **S2406** (DiPalma). The RIFTHP supported the compromise charter school legislation which would increase the cap on the number of charter schools. Currently there are 13 charter schools in Rhode Island and a statewide cap of 20. Senator DiPalma's bill would increase the cap to 35 charter schools, approximately 10% of Rhode Island public schools.

Commissioner Deborah Gist testified in support of the bill noting that the change in the cap on charter schools is an important consideration for Race to the Top funds eligibility. House and Senate legislative leaders were compelled to ensure that RI was competitive for this federal grant. Rhode Island is one of 16 states selected as finalists for the first round of grants. Given those considerations, the RIFTHP supported the bill because it included language to hold charter schools accountable for failing to meet their goals. The legislation also included a provision requiring General Assembly approval of new charter schools - something the RIFTHP has advocated for in the past.

While the charter cap is being raised, the RIFTHP reminded the Assembly members that charter schools are Rhode Island's largest unfunded education mandate. The union also informed the legislators that it will continue to be vigilant on any funding decisions that would increase charters while harming regular school district funding.

On Thursday, March 11, the House Health, Education and Welfare Committee passed **H7208 Sub A** (Gablinske). The union initially opposed the Gablinske bill which would have lifted the cap on charter schools. The amended bill is identical to the compromise bill passed by the Senate on March 10.

House Bill Introductions

- **Taxpayer Bill of Rights (TABOR)**
(**H7309** *Schadone, House Finance*)
The RIFTHP **opposes** this bill which would create a statutory limit on State government expenditures based on the Consumer Price Index (CPI), but in no event shall they exceed three percent (3%).
- **PSI – Noninterference with Collective Bargaining**
(**H7559** *McCauley, House Finance*)
The RIFTHP **supports** this act which would provide that the intervention provisions of the Rhode Island Student Investment Initiative Act would not alter or affect rights or remedies of school employees provided under federal laws, State laws, local laws or collective bargaining agreements.
- **Scope of Bargaining – Waiver of Medical Insurance**
(**H7528** *Gablinske, House Labor*)
The RIFTHP **opposes** this bill which would authorize municipalities to limit to ten percent (10%) of the health insurance premium the amount paid to employees who waive health insurance benefits.
- **Caruolo Act Elimination**
(**H7506** *Newberry, House Finance*)
The RIFTHP **opposes** this bill which would repeal the "Caruolo Act", pertaining to school budget disputes.
- **Definition of Vesting**
(**H7561** *Lally, House Finance*)
The RIFTHP **supports** this act which would define "active member" and "vested" as it applies to members of the State Retirement System.

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