
The

SMITH HILL REPORT



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House Leadership Announced

The House of Representatives announced additional leadership positions for the 2023-2024 term, which includes a few changes from the 2021-2022 leadership team. Speaker Joseph Shekarchi and Majority Leader Christopher Blazejewski kept their positions. Rep. Ray Hull replaced Rep. Lima as the Deputy Speaker. Rep. Brian Patrick Kennedy remains Speaker Pro Tempore. Rep. Katherine Kazarian remains Majority Whip and Rep. Mia Ackerman remains Deputy Majority Whip. Rep. Jay Edwards remains Floor Manager. Rep. Deborah Fellela remains Senior Deputy Majority Leader.

The House Minority Leader is Rep. Michael Chippendale, who replaced former Leader Blake Filippi who did not run for re-election. The House Minority Whip is Rep. David Place, who took the position vacated by Rep. Chippendale's promotion. Rep. Sherry Roberts remains the Senior Deputy Minority Leader.

House Committee Assignments

The House of Representatives announced committee assignments and several new committee Chairs this week. For a pdf of Committee assignments [click here](#).

The new Committee Chairs are as follows:

- Rep. Arthur Corvese was named Labor Committee Chair, replacing Rep. Anastasia Williams who lost her re-election campaign.
- Rep. Kathleen Fogarty is the new Chair of the House Rules Committee, replacing Rep. Corvese
- Rep. Karen Alzate is the new Chair of the House Special Legislation Committee, replacing Rep. Fogarty
- Rep. Stephen Casey is the new Chair of the Municipal Government Committee, replacing Rep. Hull who was appointed Deputy Speaker
- Rep. Susan Donovan is the new Chair of the Health and Human Services Committee, replacing Representative Casey
- Rep. Jaquelyn Baginski is the new Chair of the House Innovation, Internet and Technology Committee, replacing Representative Deborah Ruggiero who did not run for re-election when she ran for Lieutenant Governor.

The composition of some of the more important Committees for RIFTHP legislation are as follows:

Education

Joseph M. McNamara, Chair
Thomas E. Noret, Vice Chair
Rebecca M. Kislak, Sec. Vice Chair
Nathan W. Biah
Justine A. Caldwell
Julie A. Casimiro
Megan L. Cotter
Susan R. Donovan

Ramon A. Perez
Joshua J. Giraldo
Robert Phillips
Brian J. Rea
Sherry Roberts
Brandon T. Voas
David Morales

Labor

Arthur J. Corvese, Chair
Mary Messier, Vice Chair
Karen Alzate, Sec. Vice Chair
Jon D. Brien
Edward Cardillo, III, Jr.
Stephen M. Casey
John G. Edwards
Deborah A. Fellela

Barbara Ann Fenton-Fung
Brianna E. Henries
Carol Hagan McEntee
Joseph M. McNamara
George A. Nardone
Ramon A. Perez
Brandon C. Potter

Finance

Marvin L. Abney, Chair
Scott Slater, Vice Chair
Alex Marszalkowski, Sec. Vice Chair
Karen Alzate
Jacaquelyn M. Baginski
Nathan W. Biah
Terri-Denise Cortvriend
Grace Diaz

John G. Edwards
Raymond A. Hull
George A. Nardone
William W. O'Brien
Brian J. Rea
Teresa Ann Tanzi
Camille Vella -Wilkinson

Judiciary

Robert E. Craven, Sr., Chair
Carol Hagan McEntee, Vice-Chair
Jason Knight, Sec. Vice Chair
Edith H. Ajello
Jose F. Batista
David A. Bennett
Justine A. Caldwell
Julie A. Casimiro

Arthur J. Corvese
Cherie L. Cruz
Matthew S. Dawson
Leonela Felix
Thomas E. Noret
David J. Place
Sherry Roberts

Bill Introductions

Office of The Special Education Ombud

([S 0063](#), Murray, Senate Education)

([H 5166](#), Carson, House Education)

These bills would establish the office of the Rhode Island ombud for special education, which would serve independent of the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, to ensure school districts throughout the state meet the minimum standards required to comply with the individualized education programs for students with disabilities. These bills would also require that families be provided a method of evaluation for collecting feedback about the level of satisfaction with the special education services and dispute resolution processes available to them.

Education Funding - School-Based Mental Health Services

([S 0064](#), Cano, Senate Finance)

This bill would provide that the permanent foundation educational aid program would provide state funding for school-based mental health services pursuant to specified conditions. This bill would take effect upon passage.

Education Aid - Reduction Limit

([S 0066](#), Rogers, Senate Finance)

This bill would prohibit total education aid paid to any local education agency from being reduced by more than one percent (1%) of the municipal education appropriation in the previous fiscal year.

Student Success Factor - ELL Funding

([S 0067](#), Cano, Senate Finance)

This bill would add to the determination of the need to support high-need students a separate and independent qualifying factor of whether the student is an English language learner as defined by the Department of Education's regulations.

Universal School Lunch

([S 0068](#), Cano, Senate Education)

([H 5141](#), Caldwell, House Education)

These bills would require free lunches to be provided for all elementary and secondary students attending public schools, to the extent state and federal funds are available.

Education Aid - Reading and Math Specialists

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

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

The College Crusade Scholarship - RI Promise

([S 0070](#), Cano, Senate Education)

This bill would provide that scholarships received directly from the College Crusade Scholarship Program would not be considered financial aid pursuant to the provisions governing the Rhode Island Promise Scholarships, as set forth in chapter 107 of title 16.

Universal School Breakfast and Lunch

([S 0071](#), Acosta, Senate Education)

This bill would require free breakfast and lunches to be provided for all elementary and secondary students attending public schools.

Right To An Adequate Education

([S 0072](#), Picard, Senate Education)

This amendment to the Constitution of the State, if approved, would provide that it would be the paramount duty of the General Assembly, the Department of Education, and other government agencies to provide Rhode Island residents with equal opportunities to receive an education that is adequate, equitable and meaningful effective January 1, 2025.

Rhode Island Hope Scholarship Pilot Program Act

([S 0077](#), Pearson, Senate Finance)

([H 5099](#), McNamara, House Finance)

These bills would establish the Rhode Island Hope Scholarship pilot program act. The purpose would be to increase the number of students enrolling in and obtaining degrees in a timely fashion from Rhode Island College, and to promote more graduates in high-need fields and trades. The Hope Scholarship would provide the cost of two (2) years of tuition and mandatory fees for eligible students during their junior and senior years. These bills would include detailed eligibility requirements for students, and reporting and disbursement requirements for Rhode Island College. In addition the bill would permit charitable donations to the scholarship program as well as an annual appropriation by the general assembly.