
The

SMITH HILL REPORT



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RIFTHP Opposes Local Aid Reduction

On Thursday May 27, the House Finance Committee heard legislation that would permit communities to reduce local contributions to public schools by 5% for three consecutive years. The bill, [H6287](#), introduced by Representative Slater also contains a provision specific to the City of Providence to reduce their local contribution to education by five percent for FY 2021, 2022, 2023 because the District is under State oversight.

RIFTHP President Frank Flynn offered written testimony against the bill. In his letter ([click here](#)), Flynn addressed the underlying issue raised by the bill, namely local aid could be cut because more federal money will be given to schools. He noted that federal funds are allocated to provide vital support to States and school districts as they work to safely reopen schools and implement strategies to deal with the educational, emotional, social, and mental and physical health needs of our students.

Flynn also cited data generated by a recent Senate Education Funding Task Force that revealed that Providence, Pawtucket and Woonsocket do not currently meet the core minimum per-pupil local spending amount. He argued that these Districts, and all other school districts, cannot afford a 5% reduction for three years. He wrote "Passage of this bill would further reduce the local core contribution amount and create a greater structural deficit when the federal funds have been depleted.

Revenue Campaign E Advocacy

The RIFTHP is a founding member of the Revenue for Rhode Island Coalition. The diverse coalition of community organizations and unions came together to support legislation to increase income taxes on the wealthy to support investments in our state, such as school funding, higher education funding, human service needs, and school construction and renovation. The coalition is supporting legislation by Senator Melissa Murray ([S0326](#)) and Representative Karen Alzate ([H5227](#)) to raise taxes by three percent on income over \$475,000/year. This level of taxation only impacts people in the top 1% of income earners.

Visit the coalition website to send an email to your Senator and Representative in support of the revenue raising bills by clicking - revenueforri.org.

BILLS ON THE MOVE

The following bills which have passed one chamber of the legislature and have now been referred to the other chamber for approval.

School Accountability System - Curriculum - Student Survey

[S0033](#), which was introduced by Senator Goldin, passed the Senate on 5/25/2021 with a vote of 37 yeas, 0 nays, and 1 member not voting.

This bill would require that the board of education incorporate additional questions into its annual assessment of schools and related surveys and provide annual reports to the House of Representatives and the Senate.

Early Childhood Educator Compensation Plan

[S0066](#), which was introduced by Senator Cano, passed the Senate on 5/25/2021 with a vote of 37 yeas, 0 nays, and 1 member not voting.

This bill would require the children's cabinet, in conjunction with the department of education, to develop and implement strategies to improve the compensation of early educators.

School Availability of Feminine Hygiene Products

[S0086](#), which was introduced by Senator Lawson, passed the Senate on 5/25/2021 with a vote of 36 yeas, 0 nays, and 2 members not voting.

This bill would provide that feminine hygiene products be provided in all public schools.

Virtual Education - Inclement Weather- 5 Days

[S0151](#), which was introduced by Senator Picard, passed the Senate on 5/25/2021 with a vote of 36 yeas, 1 nay, and 1 member not voting.

This bill would repeal the requirement that the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education establish a policy allowing a school district to submit a detailed plan to conduct instruction through virtual education when schools have been closed due to inclement weather or other emergency, and amend the statutory law to allow, upon approval by the local school committee, a school district to conduct instruction through virtual education for up to five (5) days when schools have been closed due to inclement weather, emergency or any nonscheduled school closing. The plan submitted to the school committee for approval shall meet specified criteria as set forth in the statute.

Anti-Littering and Recycling Awareness Education

[S0210](#), which was introduced by Senator Felag, passed the Senate on 5/25/2021 with a vote of 36 yeas, 0 nays, and 2 members not voting.

This bill would require the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, in collaboration with the Rhode Island Resource Recovery Corporation, to make educational resources available regarding litter prevention and recycling awareness to elementary school students.

Higher Education - Alternative Pathways through Apprenticeships

[S0213](#), which was introduced by Senator Gallo, passed the Senate on 5/25/2021 with a vote of 36 yeas, 0 nays, and 2 members not voting.

This bill would create the Apprenticeship Pathways to Earning a Bachelor's Degree Act, to enable an individual to earn a bachelor's degree at public higher education institutions throughout the state by earning credits through apprenticeships.

Student Bill of Rights

[S0282](#), which was introduced by Senator Quezada, passed the Senate on 5/25/2021 with a vote of 36 yeas, 0 nays, and 2 members not voting.

This bill would provide students attending public schools enrolled in grades K-12 with a students' bill of rights prohibiting discrimination based on race, sex, gender, economic status or mental, physical, developmental, or sensory disabilities.

Student Work Permit - Worker Rights Education

[S0322](#), which was introduced by Senator Gallo, passed the Senate on 5/25/2021 with a vote of 35 yeas, 2 nays, and 1 member not voting.

This bill would require children who seek a special limited work permit to successfully complete a worker rights' training program established and funded by the department of labor and training.

School Water Bottle Filling Stations

[S0459](#), which was introduced by Senator Cano, passed the Senate on 5/25/2021 with a vote of 36 yeas, 1 nay, and 1 member not voting.

This bill would require all new school buildings and those undergoing major renovations or substantial repair or replacement to plumbing systems to install water bottle filling stations.

Municipal Worker Binding Arbitration

[S0687](#), which was introduced by Senator Lawson, passed the Senate on 5/25/2021 with a vote of 30 yeas, 5 nays, and 3 members not voting.

This bill would establish new factors for the interest contract arbitration board for municipal employee unions to consider in rendering a decision and would grant the board power to render an award over all negotiated matters, including the expenditure of money.

State Employee Contract Continuation

[S0887](#), which was introduced by Senator McCaffrey, passed the Senate on 5/25/2021 with a vote of 32 yeas, 5 nays, and 1 member not voting.

This bill would require that if state employee unions are engaged in contract negotiations and/or utilizing the dispute resolution process to adopt a successor contract, all the terms and conditions in the existing collective bargaining agreement shall continue to remain in effect, even after its expiration.

Foster Care Student Academic Report

[H5157 Sub A](#), which was introduced by Representative Casimiro, passed the House on 5/25/2021 with a vote of 73 yeas, 0 nays, and 2 members not voting.

This bill would provide that every superintendent of schools shall create an annual report on the progress and status of academic achievement of foster care youth. If foster care youth are disproportionately failing to meet academic standards a remediation plan would be developed.

African American History Curriculum

[H5697aa](#), which was introduced by Representative Williams, passed the House on 5/25/2021 with a vote of 74 yeas, 0 nays, and 1 member not voting.

This bill would require implementation of education courses in African American history in elementary and secondary schools in Rhode Island commencing in the 2022-2023 school year.

School District Listserv

[H5830](#), which was introduced by Representative Serpa, passed the House on 5/25/2021 with a vote of 74 yeas, 0 nays, and 1 member not voting.

This bill would prohibit the use of a school district's listserv to distribute any political advertisement, invitation, and/or propaganda.

BILL INTRODUCTIONS

RI Promise FAFSA Requirement

([H5826](#) *Biah, House Education*)

This bill would allow students who are legally unable to complete the FAFSA to complete a comparable form

created by the community college of Rhode Island to receive funding under the Rhode Island Promise Scholarship.

School Resource Officer Data Collection

[\(H5827 Sub A McNamara, House Education\)](#)

This bill would require the Department of Education in coordination with the Attorney General to collect and publish data concerning school resource officers in each district, including use of force against students, arrests, and referrals to law enforcement or courts.

Revision of ELL Certification Requirements

[\(H5829 Sub A Biah, House Education\)](#)

This bill would mandate the Department of Education to provide rules and regulations to streamline the English as a second language (ESL) and/or English language learner (ELL) teaching certification to allow reciprocity to persons who hold a Massachusetts teaching certificate with similar certifications, provide cohorts for teachers to take classes to obtain a certification, and conduct classes at the individual school level.

COVID Learning Loss Recovery Plans

[\(H5834 McNamara, House Education\)](#)

This bill direct all school districts to prepare district recovery plans which would include strategies and targets for students, to address losses in student academic and social emotional learning which has occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic. District recovery plans would be focused on the needs of students based on assessments, research and data analysis.

Career and Technical Education Participation

[\(S0212 Gallo, Senate Education\)](#)

[\(H5836 Shanley, House Education\)](#)

These bills would ensure that all students who wish to pursue an educational pathway in career and technical education ("CTE") have access to high quality programs both within and outside of their community of residence. This act would provide that the CTE board of trustees would annually review and provide recommendations to the board of education on a range of career and technical education issues, including but not limited to, program quality, the alignment of CTE education programs to the program industry, and graduation requirements. The act also includes a process and criteria whereby the CTE board of trustees would evaluate CTE programs to determine which programs are substantially similar to each other. The act provides that a student could access a state CTE board-approved program anywhere outside of their school district if their home district does not provide a substantially similar state-approved CTE program. The act also provides for a sharing of transportation costs between a sending and a receiving district when a student attends a CTE program outside of the student's transportation region.

Dyslexia Charter School

([H5839](#) *Quattrocchi, House Education*)

This bill would establish a charter school for students with dyslexia.

Orten-Gillingham Certified School

([H5840](#) *Quattrocchi, House Education*)

This bill would provide that if a school district established an Orten-Gillingham certified school, the program would be available to all students statewide who qualify.

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