
The

SMITH HILL REPORT

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Adjunct Medical Insurance

RIC Adjunct Faculty President Deborah Kaspin testified in support of legislation that would provide medical insurance benefits for adjunct faculty members at Rhode Island's public higher education institutions at a hearing on Tuesday, May 17, 2016. [H7379](#), by Rep. Jacquard, has been introduced for several years. President Kaspin described the workload of adjunct faculty members, many of whom work half of the course load of full-time faculty members, which should make them eligible for benefits. She described how all part-time staff other than the part-time faculty are eligible to purchase medical benefits on a pro-rated basis from the college. In summarizing her testimony, she described the unfairness of one earning less than \$20,000 per year having to pay the entire cost of their medical insurance. The RIFTHP offered written testimony describing the bill and refuting the inflated cost estimates provided by the Office of Higher Education ([testimony](#)). Michael Walker Jones was the sole opponent to the legislation.

English Language Learner Education Funding

RIFTHP Field Representative and Lobbyist James Parisi testified in support legislation introduced by Senator Juan Pichardo. The bill, [S2528](#), is similar to proposals made by Governor Raimondo to provide an additional 10% in state aid for all English Language Learners. Senator Pichardo's legislation implements the increase immediately instead of over two years. Parisi urged support of the bill as a method to fund additional services for a growing ELL population. He noted that the districts which host the highest concentration of ELL students are still severely underfunded and need additional resources.

At the same hearing, Parisi offered support for [S2203](#), also introduced by Senator Pichardo, which would ensure Rhode Island high school graduates who attend state public higher

education institutions would only be charged in-state tuition regardless of the student's immigration status. The bill codifies in state law current RI Board of Education policy.

Empowerment Schools

The RIFTHP urges members to let the Assembly know of their opposition to the Governor's Empowerment Schools proposal by using the following link: ([petition](#)). The proposal would impair school district funding, entangle RIDE in member ratification votes, and diminish certification requirements.

Bills on the Move

The following bills were passed by either the House or Senate and have now been transferred to their respective opposite Chamber:

Schools – Posting Child Abuse Hotline

([H7516](#) *Johnston, Senate Judiciary*)

This bill would require posting in every public school of a sign providing the telephone number of the child abuse hotline. The bill passed the House on 5/3 on a vote of 70-0-5. It was then transferred to the Senate Judiciary Committee where it was heard on 5/17.

School Building Authority – Voter Approval

([H7551](#) *DeSimone, Senate Finance*)

This act would permit cities and towns to borrow any amount from the School Building Authority Capital Fund to fund the LEA's share of total project costs without voter approval prior to July 1, 2016. After July 1, 2016, voter approval would be required for loans in excess of \$500,000. The bill passed the House on 4/26 on a vote of 54-13-8. It was then transferred to the Senate Finance Committee where it was heard on 5/17.

K-5 Recess

([H7644](#) *Fogarty, Senate Education*)

This bill would require public schools to provide students in grades kindergarten through five (5) with at least twenty (20) minutes of free-play recess each school day. It passed the House on 5/10 on a vote of 66-5-3. It was then transferred to the Senate Education Committee the same day.

Study Commission – Home Care

([H7951aa](#) O'Grady, House Passed)

This resolution would create an eleven (11) member special legislative study commission whose purpose it would be to study the best practices and provide recommendations for protecting and providing effective care for vulnerable populations participating in state-funded home care programs in Rhode Island, and who would report back to the House of Representatives no later than February 7, 2017, and whose life would expire on May 7, 2017. The resolution passed the House as amended on 5/11 on a vote of 69-0-5.

Self-Insurance – Developmental Disabilities Agencies

([S2013](#) Picard, House Corporations)

This bill would authorize operators of developmental disability agencies acting as a group, to self-insure health care costs for employees, retirees and other beneficiaries, and allow a qualified third-party administrator to administer said program. The bill passed the Senate on 5/12 on a vote of 31-3-4. It was then transferred to the House Corporations Committee on 5/13.

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