

The

SMITH HILL REPORT



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Budget Submission

The Governor's proposed state budget was introduced on Thursday, January 16th. The budget contains proposed changes in state law that are associated with the appropriations in the budget. These changes in state law are known as budget articles.

On Thursday, January 17, 2019, House Finance Committee Chair Marvin Abney submitted two budget bills on behalf of Governor Raimondo. [H5150](#), known as the Supplemental Budget, is legislation to balance the current fiscal year budget. [H5151](#) is the budget bill for the 2019-2020 budget year. The FY 2020 budget bill contains several changes in law and funding that are important to RIFTHP members.

Article 1 – State Appropriations

Article 1 is the appropriation portion of the budget. Within this appropriation for each state department and agency is budget guidance on how a portion of state money should be spent. Within the appropriation to the Department of Behavioral Healthcare, Developmental Disabilities and Hospitals is a provision to increase state funding by \$3 million to fund a 44 cent/hour increase for Direct Service Professionals (DSPs) working with individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (page 16).

The Elementary and Secondary Education appropriation section of the budget includes an appropriation of \$590,000 to “further support improving students’ mental health by investing in classroom-based intervention through teacher and staff training and professional development” (page 18).

The Public Higher Education appropriation section contains an appropriation of \$3.3 million to expand the RI Promise program to Rhode Island College (page 20).

Article 2 – State Funding

Article 2 relates to specific state funding laws. Article 2 creates a restricted receipt account to collect and disburse postsecondary distance education fees. The fund will be known as the “State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA)”.

[Article 10](#) – Universal Prekindergarten

Article 10 makes revisions to the existing state law on prekindergarten. Among the provisions in the budget article is a goal to provide high quality prekindergarten to 70% of four-year olds. The program would be provided by both public school districts and private providers. The budget article authorizes RIDE to adopt regulations to implement high quality universal prekindergarten.

[Article 11](#) – Rhode Island Promise

Article 11 provides statutory changes to implement the expansion of the existing CCRI RI Promise Scholarship program to adult learners as well as expansion of the RI Promise program to Rhode Island College Juniors and Seniors. To be eligible for the last dollar scholarship at RIC, the student must maintain a 2.5 grade point average and be on track to graduate on time. Article 11 also contains guidance for the Council on Postsecondary Education to revise its policies related to the transfer of credits.

[Article 15](#) – Children and Families

Article 15 provides that schools that have a high proportion of high poverty students according to the community eligibility provisions of federal law would provide school lunch without charge to all students. The Article also provides that schools with 70% or more of students eligible for free and reduced lunch will provide breakfast incorporated into the school day.

Committee Assignments

The House and Senate have adopted committee Chair positions and committee assignments. The Senate Labor Committee has a new Chair after Senator Paul Fogarty decided not to run for reelection. The Committee will be chaired by Senator Frank Ciccone. Former House Labor Committee Chair Robert Craven has now been assigned to Chair the House Judiciary Committee. The new House Labor Committee Chair is Anastasia Williams. To view all committee chair positions and all committee assignments, [click here](#).

DSP Pay Increase Advocacy

The RIFTHP joined together with SEIU, UNAP, the Machinists and the RI AFL-CIO to advocate for more state funding dedicated to increase the pay for Direct Service Professionals working group homes and adult programs for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. To view the joint letter from those organizations to the Governor and Assembly leaders, [click here](#).

Smith Hill Report

In an effort to use different forms of communication to reach out to members, last week, the RIFTHP emailed a brief two and one half minute video version of the Smith Hill Report. We intend to continue publishing written reports and video reports throughout the session on alternating weeks. We welcome your feedback on the new format. If you would like to share any comments on the new format, please email us at info@rifthp.org putting "SHR format" in the subject line.

The RIFTHP publishes regular editions of the Smith Hill Report during the legislative session. The newsletter is sent to local union leaders who then distribute it to their membership and directly to individuals that have registered to receive it. If you would like to receive this newsletter directly from the RIFTHP, you may do so by signing up using the following link: [Sign-Up](#)

Bill Introductions

Statewide Academic Standards / Curriculum Framework

[\(H5008\)](#) *McNamara, House Health, Education and Welfare*

The RIFTHP supports this bill which would provide for the review of existing and the development of new statewide academic standards by the commissioner of education. The bill would also require that all curriculum frameworks be aligned with these standards as well as with the standardized state tests being implemented in the state, including the current Rhode Island comprehensive assessment system. The bill would also direct the Commissioner of Education to annually submit a report to the Governor and the General Assembly on the progress in developing standards and curriculum frameworks.

K-2 Maximum Class Size

[\(H5047\)](#) *Millea, House Finance*

The RIFTHP supports this bill which would mandate that public school classroom size be limited to twenty (20) students for kindergarten through grade two (2). Exceptions are made for emergencies and temporary situation not to exceed three (3) days and for mid-year enrollments when it would be impractical to assign the student any class but an existing class of maximum size.

Required Professional Development – Reading Disabilities

[\(H5071\)](#) *J. Lombardi, House Health, Education and Welfare*

The RIFTHP opposes this bill which provide for professional development opportunities relating to reading disabilities and would require two (2) hours of professional development instruction pertaining to reading disabilities for certain general education teachers.

Tax Equity

([S0021](#) *Satchell, Senate Finance*)

The RIFTHP supports this bill which would add three (3) new income tax brackets for purposes of Rhode Island state income taxation. The new brackets would be a rate of 7.99% on taxable income over \$275,000 but not over \$500,000, a rate of 8.49% on taxable income over \$500,000 but not over \$1,000,000, and a rate of 8.99% on taxable income over \$1,000,000.

Carried Interest

([S0056](#) *Satchell, Senate Finance*)

The RIFTHP supports this bill which would establish a nineteen percent (19%) carried interest fairness fee for investment management services in order to tax the carried interest income of hedge fund and private equity investors as traditional ordinary earned income. This bill would take effect upon enactment into law by the states of Connecticut, New Jersey and Massachusetts of legislation having an identical effect with this act, but if the states of Connecticut, New Jersey and Massachusetts shall have already enacted such legislation, this act would take effect immediately; provided, that the Department of Revenue would notify the General Assembly of the enactment of such legislation by the states of Connecticut, New Jersey and Massachusetts in furtherance of effectuating the provisions of this act.

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