

The

SMITH HILL REPORT



PUBLISHED BY THE RHODE ISLAND FEDERATION OF TEACHERS & HEALTH PROFESSIONALS/AFT, AFL-CIO

February 12, 2021

Charter Moratorium Passes Senate By Overwhelming Margin

On a largely partisan 30-6 vote, the Rhode Island Senate approved Senator Maryellen Goodwin's legislation, [S0013Aaa](#) to enact a three-year moratorium on charter school expansion. Five Senate Republicans and freshman Senator Acosta (D) from Central Falls were the only votes against the bill. The bill, a top legislative priority for the RIFTHP and public education supporters throughout the state, will now be considered by the House of Representatives. The House charter moratorium bill is [H5193](#) by Rep. William O'Brien.

RIFTHP President Frank Flynn commented on the overwhelming Senate vote. "The RIFTHP appreciates the Rhode Island Senate for their strong support of this important bill. We are particularly grateful to Whip Goodwin who was the primary sponsor and Education Committee Chair Cano for her leadership. This bill will create a window of opportunity for the general assembly and local school districts to analyze and determine the true financial and programmatic impact charter expansion will have on the sending districts and its impact on the students."

The following 30 Senators voted Yea:

Anderson	Coyne	Goldin	Mack	Picard
Archambault	DiMario	Goodwin	McCaffrey	Quezada
Bell	DiPalma	Kallman	Mendes	Ruggerio
Burke	Euer	Lawson	Miller	Seveney
Calkin	Felag	Lombardi	Murray	Sosnowski
Cano	Gallo	Lombardo	Pearson	Valverde

The following 6 Senators Voted Nay:

Acosta	De la Cruz	Paolino
Algieri	Morgan	Rogers

The following 2 Senators did not vote:

Ciccone Raptakis

Charter Advocacy Continues

Over 1,000 RIFTHP members and public education supporters used the electronic email campaign to send an email to their Senator and Representative in support of the charter school moratorium legislation. There is still considerable work to be done to get this legislation enacted. Pro-charter advocates in the Latino community have been particularly vocal in opposition to the bill. It is imperative that people who support well-funded public schools for all students communicate their support of the moratorium legislation. The electronic campaign link has been changed to only send a bill to the House of Representatives since the Senate has already taken action. To email your Representative in support of the legislation ([click here](#)).

RIC Renovations Featured in Question 1

Seven bond questions are being put to a vote in a special election on March 2. Mail ballots are already being sent to voters who requested them. Polls have been opened for voters choosing to cast their ballots in person before election day. Contact your local town clerk for times and instructions. Polls will also be open on Tuesday, March 2nd.

The RIFTHP and the RIC/AFT Faculty Union co-authored a letter to RIFTHP members in support of the bond question #1, which would fund the renovation of the Clarke Science Building on the Rhode Island College campus along with other renovations at URI and CCRI ([click here](#)).

Callahan Reappointed to K-12 Council

Dr. Colleen Callahan, the RIFTHP Director of Professional Issues, has been reappointed to the Board of Education's Council on Elementary and Secondary Education. Her appointment was unanimously approved by the Senate on Wednesday February 10th. Also reappointed to the K-12 Council was Larry Purtill, President of NEA/RI.

Two Labor reappointments were also approved for membership of the RI State Labor Relations Board. Stan Israel, retired leader of SEIU 1199 and Scott Duhamel, who works for the Painters Union won unanimous approval of their reappointments.

Bill Introductions

Competency-based Proficiency Credit Policy

([S0150](#) *Picard, Senate Education*)

The bill requires that the Council of Elementary and Secondary Education adopt a competency-based/proficiency-based learning policy whereby students can earn credits through demonstration of competency.

Virtual Education - 5 Days

([S0151](#) *Picard, Senate Education*)

The bill allows a school district to conduct instruction through virtual education up to five (5) days when schools have been closed due to inclement weather, emergency or any nonscheduled school closings without following regulations adopted by the Board of Educations.

Feminine Hygiene Products - Higher Education Facilities

([S0152](#) *Mack, Senate Education*)

The bill requires feminine hygiene products be provided in all universities and colleges at no cost to students.

Taxation of Pension Benefits - \$15,000 to \$20,000

([S0157](#) *Felag, Senate Finance*)

This bill increases the exemption for retirement income from state income tax from fifteen thousand dollars (\$15,000) to twenty thousand dollars (\$20,000) commencing on January 1, 2022.

Trauma-informed School Practices

([S0179](#) *Bell, Senate Judiciary*)

The bill requires the Commissioner to adopt policies that establish the implementation of trauma-informed practices in schools throughout the state.

Government Employees Name Disclosure

([S0182](#) *Acosta, Senate Judiciary*)

This bill requires all public employees to furnish their name and their job title, upon request.

Revenue for Rhode Island

([H5227](#) *Alzate, House Finance*)

Thee bill adds one new income tax bracket for purposes of state income taxation. The new rate would be 8.99% (instead of 5.99%) on all income over \$475,000 per year. This new rate would impact the top 1% of income tax filers.

Income Tax Increase - Education Funding

([H5229](#) *Amore, House Finance*)

This bill creates a new income tax bracket of 6.99% on taxable income over five hundred thousand dollars.

Any tax collected on this income deposited into restricted receipt account and expended on education for grades kindergarten through twelfth grade.

State Reimbursement for School Construction - Deadline Extension

([H5232](#) *McNamara, House Education*)

This bill extends by one year the time period that schools have to commence construction to correct health and safety deficiencies in order to qualify for the additional 5% state fund for school housing aid.

Student Bill of Rights – Nondiscrimination

([H5233](#) *Diaz, House Education*)

This bill provides 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.

K-5 Student Suspension Restrictions

([H5234](#) *Diaz, House Education*)

Thee bill allows schools to suspend students, in and out of school, if in grades six or above, and prohibit school committees or principal from suspending students in grade 5 or below unless possessed weapons, narcotics or were found to be a danger to others.

CSNT Staffing Requirement - Employment of LPNs

([H5235](#) *Diaz, House Education*)

This bill provides school districts may employ LPNs to assist certified nurse teachers. The act also would require that no fewer than one nurse be employed for every seven hundred fifty (750) students.

Follow Us

The RIFTHP has a twitter account for legislative issues. If you are on twitter, follow us @RIFTHPL.

**SIGN UP
NOW!**



register to receive the SHR directly, [click here](#).