

The

SMITH HILL REPORT



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House Overwhelmingly Passes Charter Approval Reform Measures

Two charter school approval reforms were approved by House of Representatives last week. [H7051](#) sponsored by Representative Patricia Serpa, requires that city or town councils must support a charter school application before it is approved by the Rhode Island Board of Education. Her bill passed the House on January 27. [H7066](#) sponsored by Rep. Jay O'Grady, requires RIDE to make an affirmative finding that a new charter school would not have a detrimental impact on the finances or academic program of sending school districts. His bill passed the House on January 29, 2016. Both bills passed on an identical 60-11 vote.

Vote on H7051 - Serpa

Y Abney	Y Gallison	Y Morin
Y Ackerman	N Giarrusso	N Nardolillo
Y Ajello	Y Handy	Y Naughton
Y Almeida	N Hearn	Y Newberry
Y Amore	Y Hull	N Nunes
Y Azzinaro	Y Jacquard	Y O'Brien
Y Barros	Y Johnston	Y O'Grady
Y Bennett	Y Kazarian	NV Palangio
Y Blazejewski	Y Keable	Y Phillips
Y Canario	Y Kennedy	N Price
Y Carnevale	N Lancia	Y Regunberg
Y Carson	Y Lima	Y Reilly
Y Casey	Y Lombardi	Y Roberts
N Chippendale	NV MacBeth	Y Ruggiero
Y Corvese	Y Maldonado	Y Serpa
N Costa	Y Malik	Y Shekarchi
Y Costantino	N Marcello	NV Slater
Y Coughlin	Y Marshall	Y Solomon

Y Craven	Y McEntee	Y Tanzi
Y DeSimone	Y McKiernan	Y Tobon
Y Diaz	Y McLaughlin	Y Trillo
Y Edwards	Y McNamara	Y Ucci
NV Fellela	Y Melo	Y Williams
N Filippi	Y Messier	Y Winfield
Y Fogarty	N Morgan	Y Mr. Speaker

Vote on H7066 - O'Grady

Y Abney	Y Gallison	Y Morin
Y Ackerman	N Giarrusso	N Nardolillo
Y Ajello	Y Handy	Y Naughton
Y Almeida	N Hearn	Y Newberry
Y Amore	Y Hull	N Nunes
Y Azzinaro	Y Jacquard	Y O'Brien
Y Barros	Y Johnston	Y O'Grady
Y Bennett	Y Kazarian	Y Palangio
Y Blazejewski	Y Keable	Y Phillips
Y Canario	Y Kennedy	N Price
Y Carnevale	N Lancia	Y Regunberg
Y Carson	Y Lima	Y Reilly
Y Casey	Y Lombardi	Y Roberts
N Chippendale	N MacBeth	Y Ruggiero
Y Corvese	Y Maldonado	Y Serpa
N Costa	Y Malik	Y Shekarchi
Y Costantino	N Marcello	NV Slater
Y Coughlin	Y Marshall	Y Solomon
Y Craven	Y McEntee	NV Tanzi
Y DeSimone	Y McKiernan	Y Tobon
Y Diaz	Y McLaughlin	Y Trillo
Y Edwards	Y McNamara	Y Ucci
NV Fellela	Y Melo	Y Williams
Y Filippi	NV Messier	Y Winfield
Y Fogarty	N Morgan	Y Mr. Speaker

Commissioner Wagner

Commissioner Ken Wagner presented his ideas for education reform at a hearing of the House HEW Committee on Wednesday January 27. He spoke about his interest in fostering innovation by empowering

Principals and changing collective bargaining in schools with shared governance. He is also interested in creating school choice among school districts. Some of his ideas were mentioned in Raimondo's budget address and may appear in legislation this session.

The Rhode Island General Assembly website contains a link to allow viewers to watch past committee hearings on demand. To see Wagner's committee presentation, or other past hearings, use this link. ricaptv.discovervideo.com/show/watch?id=605f550f&t=1

Budget Submission

Governor Gina Raimondo presented her state budget proposal before a joint session of the House and Senate on Tuesday February 2, 2016. Her budget request included budget appropriations for education and all state departments and agencies as well as proposed statutory changes, called Budget Articles, related to her budget plan. The next issue of the Smith Hill Report will highlight certain provisions of her proposed budget.

Bill Introductions

State Funding of Charter Schools

[\(H7067\)](#) *Barros, House Finance*

RIFTHP supports this act which would eliminate a city or town's financial obligation to contribute to their resident students who enroll in charter schools, William M. Davies, Jr. Career and Technical High School or the Metropolitan Regional Career and Technical Center.

Student Loan Bill of Rights

[\(H7081\)](#) *McNamara, House Health, Education and Welfare*

RIFTHP supports this act which would authorize the creation of the position of student loan ombudsman within the division of higher education assistance of the office of the commissioner of postsecondary education. The duties of the ombudsman would be to attempt to resolve complaints from student loan borrowers, compile and analyze data on such complaints, and to otherwise assist student loan borrowers. The act would also provide that the commissioner of postsecondary education would review and evaluate applications for licensure as a student loan issuer.

Income Tax Credit - Government Pension

[\(H7102\)](#) *McNamara, House Finance*

RIFTHP supports this act which would exempt state, federal, and military pensions from state income tax with income limitations for the filer.

Teacher Survivor Benefit Increase

[\(H7181 Amore, House Finance\)](#)

The RIFTHP supports this act which would increase the monthly minimum benefits of spouses and domestic partners of retired teachers, and would authorize additional yearly non-compounded adjustments.

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