

May 27, 2025

Revenue for Rhode Islanders Petition Deadline

The RIFTHP is a founding member of the **Revenue for Rhode Islanders** Coalition that is supporting legislation to increase income taxes on earnings over \$625,000 per year. The Coalition plans to submit a petition to the House and Senate leadership in support of the bill this coming week. To use the Coalition site to put your name on a petition in support of the legislation, [click here](#).

Developmental Disability Provider Rate Increase

On Tuesday, May 20, the House Finance Committee heard legislation by Representative Dawson that would provide a 2.3% increase to all agencies that provide services to those with developmental disabilities. The RIFTHP offered a [letter of support](#) for [H 5989](#). In his letter, RIFTHP lobbyist James Parisi asked for increased state funding to avoid a staffing crisis in agencies caused by low pay for Direct Service Professionals (DSP). The RIFTHP represents employees at the J. Arthur Trudeau Center impacted by the legislation.

The new President of the Center Employees Union, AFT Local 3726, Anna Landolfi attended the hearing and testified in support of the bill. She told the Committee that she has worked in the field for 35 years and has seen the highs and lows of state funding. Because of inadequate compensation, the agency is having challenges retaining staff, with many new recruits leaving after 6 to 9 months. She described her group home, which has 6 residents in wheelchairs, being down 5 full-time staff, which is unsafe. Landolfi urged the passage of the bill.



Anna Landolfi, President of the Center Employees Union

Municipal Employee Binding Arbitration

On Wednesday, May 21, the Senate Labor Committee held a hearing on legislation that would permit binding arbitration on all issues related to municipal employee collective bargaining. The RIFTHP testified and offered [written testimony](#) in support of [S 1059](#) by Senator Thompson. James Parisi informed the Committee that the RIFTHP represents four bargaining units of school employees who bargain under the municipal employee bargaining statute. The communities are Woonsocket, North Providence, Cranston, and Coventry. On their behalf, Parisi voiced support for the bill.

When contract negotiations get bogged down, the parties can involve a mediator and then submit issues to arbitration. The arbitrator, after a hearing, will then issue an award to resolve the dispute. Under current law, the arbitration award is binding on working conditions but is only advisory on financial matters. S 1059 would make arbitration binding on all matters.

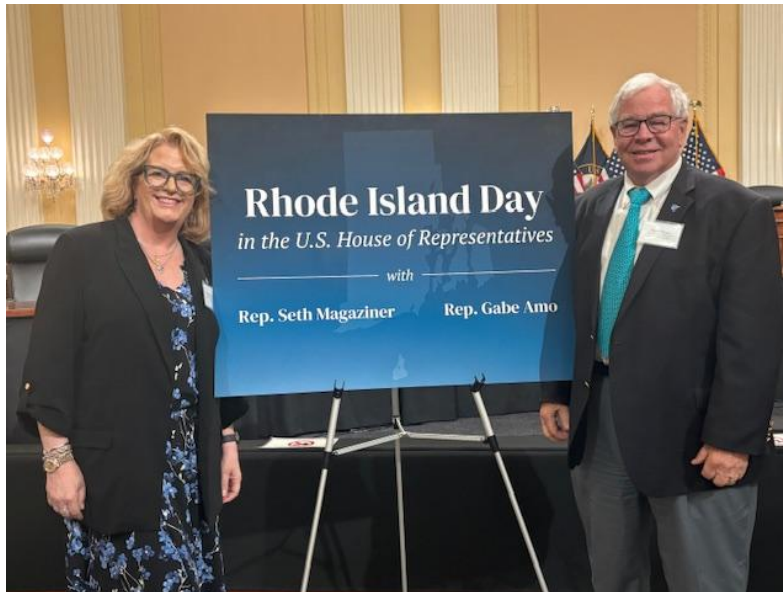
Parisi and NAGE/IBPO lobbyist John Rossi testified at the hearing. There was no opposition testimony, although the League of Cities and Towns submitted a letter against the bill. Parisi testified that neither labor nor management should want an arbitrator to decide all issues, and that the existence of binding arbitration would be an incentive to get the parties to reach agreement. The Committee voted to hold the bill for further study.

School Funding Initiates

On Tuesday, May 20, the Senate Finance Committee heard testimony on numerous bills, including two bills supported by the RIFTHP. [S 256](#) by Senator Melissa Murray, would create a funding stream for student behavioral health. This new categorical state funding stream would be based on 2% of a district's education expenditure. The money would be used to hire staff to support student mental and behavioral health such as social workers, counselors, psychologists, paraprofessionals, and Registered Behavioral Techs (RBT).

The RIFTHP also supported [S 448](#) by Senator Murray. That bill would fully-fund all education categorical funds instead of having a pro-rated reduction of the special funding streams because the Assembly did not appropriate the full amount necessary. Categorical funding streams include funding for student transportation, high-cost special education, and Pre-K.

Rhode Island Day



RIFTHP President Maribeth Calabro and AFT Vice-President Frank Flynn joined other state leaders for a day of meetings with legislative leaders in Washington DC organized by the RI congressional delegation.

Court Reporter Page Rate Bill Advances

On Thursday, May 22, the House of Representatives voted 63 to 0 to approve legislation to increase the rate of pay court reporters receive when transcribing court proceedings. [H 6159](#) increases the rate from \$3.00 to \$3.50 per page. The RIFTHP represents Court Reporters and Electronic Court Reporters in Family and Superior Court. RIFTHP President Maribeth Calabro commented on the vote, "We are deeply grateful to Speaker Shekarchi and Representative Craven for their unwavering support and advocacy in passing the Court Reporter page rate bill. This important legislation sends a clear message that Rhode Island values the essential work of our court reporters. By making their compensation competitive with neighboring states, we're ensuring fairness, professionalism, and continued excellence in our courts."

This Week

- On Tuesday, the Senate Finance Committee will hear bills related to school healthy meals, bilingual education and staffing ratios for school social workers
- On Tuesday, the House Education Committee and the Senate Health and Human Services Committee will vote on legislation to train university residential staff on opioid overdose prevention
- On Tuesday, the Senate Judiciary Committee will vote on the House bill to increase the page rate for court transcripts
- On Thursday, the Senate Finance Committee will hear legislation to raise taxes on income over \$625,000

Bill Introductions

Assembly Approval of Agency Regulations

([S 852](#), DiPalma, Senate Judiciary)

([H 5085](#), Corvese, House State Government & Elections)

These bills would require that all agencies' final rules, promulgated pursuant to the administrative procedures act, be approved by General Assembly Action, but in no case later than 3 December 31 of the year it is promulgated before it can become effective.

State School Takeover - Receivership

([S 860](#), Zurier, Senate Education)

This bill would allow the board of regents to appoint a receiver to manage a school district with the authority described in § 16-7.1-5.2 relating to state intervention in the Providence Public School District.

Providence School Receivership

([S 861](#), Zurier, Senate Education)

This bill would allow the education commissioner, when authorized by the board of regents, to designate a receiver for the Providence Public School District with all the powers of the Superintendent and School committee.

Board of Trustees -- Mayoral Academies

([S 888](#), Pearson, Senate Education)

This bill would provide that only a mayor or town administrator could be a voting member of the board of directors or trustees for a mayoral academy. The bill would also authorize other nonvoting members on the board of directors and trustees, from each included city or town that the Mayoral Academy serves.

State Takeover - Individual Schools

([S 922](#), Bissaillon, Senate Education)

([H 5594](#), DeSimone, House Education)

These bills would require the Board of Regents to adopt progressive support and intervention strategies consistent with the Comprehensive Education Strategy and the principles of the "School Accountability for Learning and Teaching" (SALT) within one school district at a time.

School Transportation Region Reorganization

([S 972](#), Ujifusa, Senate Education)

([H 6236](#), Cortvriend, House Finance)

These bills would amend the composition of school bus districts within the state to provide transportation to students in kindergarten grades through 12. These bills would change the total number of districts from five (5) to nine (9) districts, to promote greater efficiency, cost savings, and for many students, reduce the amount of time spent on a school bus.

Students receiving transportation prior to December 30, 2025, under regions established in 1977, would be grandfathered into their old districts until July 1, 2029. These bills would also provide that the categorical aid for excess costs associated with transporting students to out-of-district non-public schools would not be less than the higher of what was provided in fiscal years 2026 or 2027, and that any unused portions of this expense would be used to create a student transportation subsidy for students who are homeless, in foster care, or high special needs students.

School Indoor Air Quality

([S 977](#), DiPalma, Senate Health & Human Services)

This bill would require that the Department of Health provide recommended air quality standards for schools. This bill would further provide that the Department of Education incorporate indoor air quality testing as part of the school building authority needs assessment conducted every five years pursuant to § 16-105-3. This bill would also provide that HVAC systems in schools achieve a MERV level of 13 or highest level achievable by system design.

Local 2012 Bargaining Rights

([S 987](#), DiPalma, Senate & Labor & Gaming)

([H 5227](#), Edwards, House Labor)

These bills would provide protection for the rights of professional, administrative, and secretarial employees of the Department of Education to Collectively Bargain over all terms and conditions of employment.

Retired Teacher COLA Restoration

([S 1000](#), McKenny, Senate Finance)

This bill would eliminate the distinction between teachers who retired on or before June 30, 2012, and those teachers who retired after June 30, 2012, with respect to retirement benefit adjustments. Additionally, this bill would require that teachers who retired and who were covered under a municipal pension would receive the same COLA adjustment as teachers covered by the state retirement system.

State Medicaid Coverage - School Behavioral Health Services

([S 1004](#), DiMario, Senate Health & Human Services)

([H 6308](#), Tanzi, House Finance)

These bills would require the executive office of Health and Human Services to apply to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services for a state plan amendment that authorizes the state to provide for reimbursement for all medically necessary behavioral health services provided in a school setting to all individuals enrolled in Medicaid or the Children's Health Insurance Program regardless of whether the services are provided under an individualized educational program or individualized family service plan. School districts are required to use the funds reimbursed for school-based behavioral health services to support school-based behavioral health programs and services.

Questions

RIFTHP members with questions about the Smith Hill Report or our legislative agenda may reach out to RIFTHP Lobbyist James Parisi at (401) 273-9800 or at jparisi@rifthp.org.

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