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*The*

# SMITH HILL REPORT



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## **Budget Appropriations Highlights**

The budget bill contains appropriations for all state departments and agencies. It also contains proposed statutory changes related to the budget proposal, known as Budget Articles. Last week's Smith Hill Report included a summary of issues included in Budget Articles. Below are highlights of some of the important appropriation proposals included in the Governor's Budget organized by the State Department or Agency where the appropriation is proposed.

### **Wavemaker Fellowship**

The Governor proposed to increase Commerce Department funding by **\$800,000** to expand the existing State's Wavemaker Fellowship program to teachers and certain mental health workers. The program provides up to four years of tax credits for school loan repayments. The maximum credit for loan repayments for a bachelor's degree is \$4,000 per year.

### **Direct Support Professional Wage Increase**

The Governor proposed to increase the Behavioral Healthcare, Developmental Disabilities and Hospitals (BHDDH) budget by **\$13.9 million** in state funding to support a wage increase for Direct Support Professionals who work with individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The funding would provide a \$2 / hour increase to workers. The increase would be supported by an increase of \$16 million in federal matching funds, for a total increase of **\$30.8 million** in funding.

The Governor has also proposed to add 10 FTEs (full time equivalent positions) to the BHDDH budget to comply with a federal consent decree related to programs offered to adults with developmental disabilities

## Education Funding Formula

The Governor has touted his proposed **\$57 million** increase in state education funding. The changes include increases in the education funding formula, increases in other funding known as categorical funding, and other adjustments. Overall school district funding will increase **\$19.8 million** and charter school funding will increase **\$21.2 million**. The Achievement First network alone will see a \$10.3 million increase under Governor McKee's proposal. The additional \$19.8 million for school districts represents a 2.1% school funding increase for the 2023-2024 school year.

A chart showing proposed funding increases by school district and charter school can be accessed by [clicking here](#).

- The Governor increased the Rhode Island Department of Education budget by **\$9.9 million** to increase the student success factor from 40% to 42% of per pupil state funding. The student success factor is a percentage increase of state education aid for students falling below certain poverty measures.
- The Governor proposed to establish a Public Schools of Choice Supplemental Transition Fund of **\$7.9 million** to compensate school districts experiencing enrollment loss due to charter school expansion.
- The budget proposed an increase in education aid by **\$2.5 million** for students who are experiencing homelessness.
- The Governor proposed to increase RIDE's budget by **\$8.5 million** to ensure that school districts which experienced enrollment decline did not lose education aid compared to last year's allocation.

## Categorical Education Funding

In addition to the education aid formula, Rhode Island provides additional education money based on categories of expenditures. Unlike the funding formula, these categorical funds do not change every year unless the Assembly amends the allocations. The Governor proposed increases in the following categorical funding streams:

- Multilingual Learners (MLL) increase of **\$7.8 million**.
- High-Cost Special Education increase of **\$4.8 million**.
- Early Childhood funding increase of **\$8 million**.
- Regional District Transportation increase of **\$1.4 million**.

### Additional RIDE Funding Changes

- The Governor proposes to increase state funding for school construction by **\$14.9 million**.
- The Governor proposed to increase the number of FTEs at RIDE by 4, adding a Transformation Specialist, an MLL Specialist, a position for Enroll RI (charter school and school choice platform) and Data Assessment position.
- **\$3 million** increase for Adult Education providers.
- **\$4 million** for community organizations for out-of-school learning.

### Higher Education Funding

The Governor proposed increasing funding for all three public higher education institutions and other adjustments as follows:

Increase Rhode Island College funding by **\$3.6 million**.

Increase the University of Rhode Island funding by **\$7.9 million**.

Increase Community College of Rhode Island Funding by **\$2.6 million**.

Move 3 FTEs from URI to the Office of Postsecondary Commissioner and add 4 FTE to the OPC to expand the RI Longitudinal Data System (known as Dataspark).

### Senate Committee Assignments

The Senate has announced Committee assignments for the 2023-2024 term. [Click here](#) to view a one page list of major committee assignments. Some of the more important committees to RIFTHP legislation are as follows:

#### Education

Sandra Cano, Chair  
Hanna M. Gallo, Vice Chair  
Ana B. Quezada, Secretary  
Louis P. DiPalma

Tiara T. Mack  
Mark P. McKenney  
Thomas J. Paolino  
Samuel D. Zuier

#### Labor

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Frank S. Lombardi, Vice Chair  
John P. Burke, Secretary  
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Frank Lombardo, III  
Melissa A. Murray  
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V. Susan Sosnowski

### **Finance**

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Melissa A. Murray 1st Vice Chair  
Walter S. Felag, Jr., 2nd Vice Chair  
Jonathon Acosta, Secretary  
Robert Britto

Sandra Cano  
Frank A Ciccone, III  
Thomas J. Paolino  
V. Susan Sosnowski  
Samuel D. Zurier

### **Judiciary**

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Frank S. Lombardi, Vice-Chair  
Leonidas P. Raptakis, Secretary  
John P. Burke  
Anthony DeLuca

Matthew L. LaMountain  
Mark P. McKenney  
Ana B. Quezada  
David P. Tikoian

### **Health and Human Services**

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Bridget Valverde, Vice Chair  
Valerie Lawson  
Alana DiMario

Pamela J. Lauria  
Elaine J. Morgan  
Linda L. Ujifusa

### **Bill Introductions**

#### **Universal Free School Lunch**

([H 5141](#), Caldwell, House Education)

This bill would require free lunches to be provided for all elementary and secondary students attending public schools, to the extent state and federal funds are available.

#### **Office Of The Special Education Ombud**

([H 5166](#), Carson, House Education)

This bill would establish the office of the Rhode Island ombud for special education, which would serve independent of the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, to ensure school districts throughout the state meet the minimum standards required to comply with the individualized education programs for students with disabilities. This bill would also require that families be provided a method of evaluation for collecting feedback about the level of satisfaction with the special education services and dispute resolution processes available to them.

### **Curriculum Materials - Science and Technology – Extension**

([H 5167](#), McNamara, House Education)

This bill would extend the date to June 30, 2027 for local education agencies to select identified high quality curricula and materials for science and technology. It would also require the Department of Education to establish competencies for utilizing high quality curriculum materials by June 2023.

### **Fast Track Principal Certification - Program Standards**

([H 5168](#), McNamara, House Education)

This bill would revise the fast-track principal certification program and require a course in program evaluation (including data analysis) instead of a course in supervision of school personnel. This bill would also provide that participants who have earned a principal certification by fulfilling all of the requirements and completing courses offered by RIDE, would instead complete an additional course on program evaluation (including data analysis) in lieu of the department approved leadership program to build leadership skills that support teaching and learning.

### **House Resolution - Providence School Closures**

([H 5170](#), Sanchez, House Education)

House resolution strongly urging the Providence Public School district and the Rhode Island Department of Education to reverse the decision to close the Alan Shawn Feinstein Elementary School, The Carl G. Lauro Elementary School, and the Gilbert Stuart Middle School.

### **Municipal Employee Binding Arbitration**

([H 5180](#), Bennett, House Labor)

This bill would recognize that municipal employees have the opportunity to utilize interest arbitration and would establish new factors for the arbitrators to consider. These factors would include comparisons of wages and hourly conditions of employment in similarly skilled jobs. This bill would also grant the arbitrators power to render an award over all negotiated matters, including the expenditure of money.

### **General Assembly Approval of State Regulations**

([H 5187](#), Corvese, House State Government & Elections)

This bill 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 December 31 of the year it is promulgated before it can become effective.

### **State Employee Longevity Restoration**

([H 5194](#), Corvese, House Finance)

This bill would restore longevity payments of five percent (5%) of base salary for employees after ten (10) years of service and increase to ten percent (10%) of base salary after twenty (20) years of service, beginning July 1, 2023.

### **Teacher Post-Retirement Employment - Cap Elimination**

([H 5196](#), Craven, House Finance)

([S 0020](#), Valverde, Senate Finance)

This bill would add a section which allows substitute teachers and post-retirement employees to exceed the ninety (90) day cap on post-retirement employment if certain conditions are met.

### **Higher Education Security Staff - Detention Authority**

([H 5215](#), Craven, House Judiciary)

This bill would permit non-sworn public safety officers and non-sworn security guards at private colleges and universities to detain individuals within the campus's jurisdiction when the officer or guard has reasonable grounds to believe that the person has committed a criminal offense. Upon detaining said person, the non-sworn public safety officers/security guards, must immediately request the assistance of the state police or local police having jurisdiction and may not detain the person for a period of time longer than thirty (30) minutes.

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