



The

# SMITH HILL REPORT

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## Act Now

Legislation to create a three year moratorium on using standardized testing as a graduation requirement is scheduled to be heard before the Senate Education Committee Wednesday, May 7. If you care about the issue, reach out to your Senator about the issue by [clicking here](#). You may add or edit the message drafted for your convenience. Time is of the essence on this important issue for our students.



Please support the testing moratorium on the use of the NECAP as a graduation requirement

The Rhode Island Federation of Teachers and Health Professionals strongly supports Senate Bill 2059 Sub A, which is currently under consideration before the Senate Education Committee. This bill would prohibit the NECAP or any other state assessment from being used as a graduation requirement until July 1, 2017.

The NECAP test was never designed to be used as a measure to determine a student's eligibility to graduate.

Take action now. Let your Senator know you support this bill by using the link below.

In order to address your message to the appropriate recipient, we need to identify where you are. Please look up and use your full nine-digit zip for the best results.

The issue will also be considered at the next Board of Education meeting to be held on Monday, May 12 at 5:30pm at the Blackstone Valley Academy Charter School on Broad Street in Cumberland. All members, teachers and students are encouraged to attend Monday's Board of Education meeting to share their perspective.

## Lead Poisoning Prevention Act Heard

The Lead Poisoning Prevention Act was heard on April 29 before the House Committee on Finance. [H7803](#) (Handy) is a bill that would provide for dedicated funding to the Department of Health to support the state's environmental lead program.

The RI Federation of Teachers and Health Professionals weighed in on this bill to restore at least a minimum level of funding to the Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Act and the Lead Hazard Reduction Program. RIFTHP Political Director Maureen Martin reminded the Committee that they

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had received written documentation showing that in 2012 over 20% of children entering kindergarten in RI had already been affected by lead poisoning. *"The fact that children in every RI city and town have been affected and that 1 in 5 kindergarteners are starting their educational careers already impacted by lead poisoning should be a wake-up call for all of us"* said Martin. She stressed to the committee that beyond the need to protect children and their families the economics of this preventative health issue must be considered.

NEA's Patrick Crowley also spoke from an educational and budgetary perspective and reminded the committee that in 2013 it is estimated that \$17 million dollars was spent on special education services directly related to lead poisoning.

Dr. Nick Tsiongas, a former State Representative who was the champion of the original Lead Poisoning Prevention Act of 1991 spoke in favor of the bill citing the fact that lead poisoning is a fully preventable disease that still affects children, causing problems ranging from behavioral issues to academic challenges to severe cognitive disabilities.

Several community, social justice, health, environmental, small business and human services organizations joined with parents of children who have been significantly adversely affected by lead poisoning, to speak in favor of this bill to help ensure funding for preventative abatement in homes occupied by children at risk. No one spoke against the bill.

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## Just Cause/Right to Rent

The Residential Landlord and Tenant Act was heard at the House Judiciary Committee on Wednesday, April 30. This legislation would require banks and lending institutions to keep residents in their homes after a property is foreclosed on. Tenants could not be evicted without just cause.

For the last three years, representatives of the RIFTHP have testified in favor of the so-called Just Cause/Right to Rent legislation. This year Maureen Martin, RIFTHP's Political Director, submitted written



Rep. John Carnivale, talks about contract continuation legislation and apprenticeship programs.

LaborVision is seen on Cox Ch. 14 and FioS Ch. 33

Tuesdays @ 7PM

Thursday @ 8PM

Saturday @ 5PM

testimony in support of [H7449](#) (Edwards) to help keep students and their families from being evicted from their homes. In her testimony Martin talked about the impact of foreclosures and resulting evictions, specifically the affect evictions have on school children. She said *"As educators, we are concerned that when the primary need of shelter is taken from the child, school success becomes a far less likely pursuit."*

The testimony also quoted Bill Izzi, the now retired Guidance Coordinator for the West Warwick Public Schools, who said in his own testimony last year *"There can be no doubt in any educators mind, that a significant proportion of students who make up our state's woefully high dropout rate are from families who move from district to district, unable to establish a consistent place of residence due to the state of housing."*

Several community advocacy groups joined the Tenant and Homeowner Association of the Direct Action for Rights & Equality in testifying for this legislation to end post-foreclosure evictions saying it is a step towards ending foreclosure and stemming the tide of evictions that produce homelessness and neighborhood blight. Some of the groups were the RI Coalition for the Homeless, the RI Homeless Advocacy Project, Riverwood Housing First, and the Massachusetts Alliance Against Predatory Lending.

Speaking against the bill was the Credit Union Association of RI although they are exempt from the bill and the RI Bankers' Association.

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## Coming Up

On Wednesday, May 7, at the rise, the [House Judiciary Committee](#) will hear testimony on [H8035](#) (Pension Revocation, Slater) and the [Senate Education Committee](#) will hear testimony on [S2059A](#) (Standardized Test - Graduation Requirement - 3 Year Moratorium, Satchell). On Thursday, May 8, at the rise, the [House Finance Committee](#) will hear testimony on [H7642](#) (Adjunct Faculty Medical Benefits, Jacquard). Also at the rise, the [Senate Finance Committee](#) will hear testimony on [S2195](#) (DSP Rate Increase, DiPalma) and [S2581](#) (Charter

and State School Funding - Attendance, Cool  
Rumsey).

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