



The

SMITH HILL REPORT



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

Unanimous!!!

On Wednesday, May 21, the House Health, Education and Welfare Committee passed Representative O'Brien's bill to permit effective and highly effective teachers to be evaluated on every three or four years respectively. The vote was 15-0 with one abstention. The bill, [H7096 Sub A](#) was amended to ensure annual evaluations for teachers who change certification. The bill will be voted on by the entire House of Representatives today.

RIFTHP President Frank Flynn urged passage of the bill in a letter to House members ([click here](#)).

Funding Developmentally Disabled Programs

On Thursday, May 22, identical bills were heard in the House and Senate Finance Committees to restore \$15 million in funding to organizations that provide services to the developmentally disabled. [H7565](#) (Guthrie) and [S2746](#) (Doyle) would increase state funding and target the money to agencies that expand and create work programs in response to a settlement of federal claims that the state of Rhode Island is not in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

RIFTHP lobbyist James Parisi testified at both hearings. He stated the need to increase funding since less than 50% of the \$24 million cut to these organizations has been restored to date and reiterated the problems associated with lack of agency funding which leads to lower services for DD clients. He cited an example where the Trudeau Center recently had 115 vacant positions for Direct

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Service Professionals out of a bargaining unit comprised of about 250 members.

The low rate of state reimbursement leads to lower pay, reduced benefits, and the proliferation of part-time jobs because the agency does not want to provide medical insurance benefits to full time workers. This means that the agency has a hard time filling jobs and has a hard time keeping people in jobs once hired. This also impacts the quality of job applicants. He told the committees that without an infusion of state funding, services will decline.

Joining Parisi testifying in support of the legislation was Emmanuel Faulk of SEIU, Noelle Siravo, a parent, and Tom Kane, the President of AccessPoint.



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

Tuesdays @ 7PM

Thursday @ 8PM

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Fair Funding for All-day Kindergarten

A bill to address a funding barrier when public schools transition from half day to full day kindergarten was heard in the Senate Education Committee on Wednesday, May 21. Committee chair, Senator Hanna Gallo sponsored the bill [S2791](#) - Full Day Accountability Act. Senator Gallo explained that an inequity was built into the law that creates an unfair financial burden on school districts as they try to transition from a half-day to an all-day kindergarten program. In the current funding formula, districts need to wait four years before they receive full reimbursement for the full-day program or until they have gone through a transitional cycle.

The committee heard testimony about the added benefits of an all-day kindergarten program on students and school districts. They heard that all day K is a strategy for not only closing the gap among different groups of students but can help to prevent the gap before it gets established. *"No one knows better than our teacher members that all-day K promotes higher academic achievement throughout a student's educational career, improves student attendance and has many social and emotional benefits"* said the RIFTHP's Political Director, Maureen Martin.

Senator Ryan Pearson testified that in his town of Cumberland a decision was made to move the half-

day kindergarten program to full-day. He said that many sacrifices had to be made to curtail other services in order to fund the new kindergarten program while the town did not receive full funding until the fourth year of the transitional cycle. He noted that Cumberland's Mayoral Academy gets fully funded and enjoys a full day program without the financial disincentive.

The Commissioner and representatives from the Highlander Charter School, RI CAN, the RI Association of School Committees, the RI School Superintendents Association and RI Kids Count each testified in support of this bill. No one testified against the bill. The bill was held for further study while funding is sought.

Charter School Funding

On Thursday, May 22, the RIFTHP supported legislation to revise the funding formula used to reimburse charter schools. [H8023](#) (Serpa) would remove from the reimbursement formula, expenses that school districts have but charter schools don't.

For example, charter schools do not incur expenses for private school textbooks, out-of-district special education costs, and in the case of mayoral academies, the payment of the unfunded pension liability.

RIFTHP lobbyist James Parisi made the case for the bill at the House Finance Committee hearing. He described the need to revise the formula to make it fairer to regular public school districts. He told the Committee that there are potentially six new charter schools opening next year and that the formula should be corrected prior to these new schools opening.

Joining Parisi in support of the bill was Tim Duffy of the RI Association of School Committees, a Lincoln School Committee member, and the NEA/RI.

Opponents were the League of Charter Schools, the RI Mayoral Academies organization, and RI-CAN, a corporate-funded charter school advocacy group.



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