

*The*

# SMITH HILL REPORT



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## Public Higher Education Performance Based Funding

On Wednesday, April 15, in the Senate Education Committee, the RIFTHP supported revisions to a performance funding bill introduced by Senate President Teresa Paiva-Weed. The bill, [S0603](#), creates a mechanism for all three public higher education institutions to set goals and measure progress towards reaching those goals. Additional state funding over the FY 2016 base year would be under increased control by the Commissioner of Postsecondary Education if progress towards established goals is not met. The legislation also directs the Commissioner to begin work on developing a higher education funding formula. The bill is promoted as a means to get institutions to focus on getting students to graduate in a timely manner.

Performance Based Funding legislation promoted in other states in the last decade has been used to restrict existing funding. The Rhode Island legislation leaves existing funding unencumbered and focuses Commissioner intervention to new state money. The RIC/AFT established a working group to review the legislation, educate faculty on the issues surrounding the bill, and advocated for some legislative changes.

RIC/AFT Vice-President Quenby Hughes testified at the Senate Education hearing in support of amendments to the original bill. She recognized the Senate President's willingness to enhance faculty voice in the establishment of goals and enhanced faculty role in the development of a higher education funding system. She voiced concern about any potential negative impact in devaluing the humanities as goals are established since one of the goals is tied to "degrees awarded that are tied to Rhode Island's high demand, high wage employment opportunities."

May 4, 2015

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She promised vigilance on that issue as the program is implemented.

RIFTHP lobbyist James Parisi testified in support of the proposed Sub A. He cited the great opportunity that exists in the legislation to create a funding stream for public higher education that is one of the most underfunded systems in the country. The RIFTHP noted that some of the criticism of the bill is based on the excessively high cost of higher education and that this bill may help resolve that problem by creating a push for increased funding.

The Presidents of RIC, CCRI and URI all testified in support of the bill as did the Commissioner of Postsecondary Education. The NEA/RI leader from CCRI testified in support of the amended bill. Several CCRI faculty testified against the legislation, focusing on the high cost of education and its impact on degree completion.

Parisi offered similar testimony when the House version of the bill was heard in the HEW Committee on April 29. That legislation, [H5792](#) by Rep. McNamara was introduced by the sponsor as needing amendments developed in the Senate. At the hearing, Parisi commented on the need to be vigilant to protect liberal arts degrees and indicated the faculty would support additional revisions to the legislation. He also supported student participation in the goals and metrics. Finally, he indicated the necessity of developing a higher education funding system to make postsecondary education more affordable to RI students.

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## RIFTHP Supports School Construction and Renovation

The RIFTHP testified at the hearing for Budget [Article 9](#) on Tuesday, April 28, in the House Finance Committee. The article would establish a new mechanism to oversee the state school construction and renovation program. Rhode Island students, teachers and staff have suffered through a four year moratorium on state school construction and renovation (except for health and safety projects).

The moratorium would cease with the enactment of the new program.



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

**Tuesday @ 7PM**

**Thursday @ 7PM**

**Saturday @ 5PM**

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RIFTHP lobbyist James Parisi testified in support of the Article. He noted that some school buildings are in deplorable condition and that the state needed to support the program. The Raimondo proposal would infuse an additional \$20 million more than existing funding for school projects. He told the Committee that this initiative is one of the most important items the Assembly is working on this session.

Parisi also testified on two details of Article 9. He thanked Governor Raimondo for preserving the existing school housing staff currently employed at RIDE represented by AFT Local 2012. Other proposals would not have preserved existing staff based on the reorganization. Parisi also objected to the portion of Article 9 that gave charter schools a greater share of state money for approved school construction and renovation projects. Paris asked that priority be given to existing building needs in traditional public schools.

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### Teacher Hearing Revision Considered

Legislation introduced by Rep. Ruggiero [H6049](#) would eliminate the requirement that any hearing for a proposed teacher termination or suspension be considered by every member of the school committee or school board. The issue was first proposed in the Senate. In response to RIFTHP objections to the original bill, Rep. Ruggiero introduced an amended version of the bill that would require an affirmative vote of the majority of the school committee for any termination or suspension.

At the April 30 hearing before the House Labor Committee, RIFTHP President Frank Flynn asked for an additional amendment to ensure that those voting on the teacher termination or suspension were present at the hearing prior to casting a vote on the issue. The amendment received a favorable response and may be incorporated into a new version of the legislation at a later date.

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### Public School Choice

Legislation was introduced in the House Finance Committee that would create a public school choice

program, allowing students to pick the public school of their choice to attend. The legislation, [H5563](#) by Rep. Nardolillo, would allow districts to offer seats to public school students. Funding would be provided to the receiving district and the sending district would lose state aid to pay for tuition. Districts would be allowed to stop receiving new students. Districts would not be able to prevent students from leaving the district to attend another school.

RIFTHP lobbyist James Parisi testified against the legislation. He cited the significant financial impact the bill would have on sending districts as sufficient reason to oppose the bill. Without the state paying for the costs, local taxpayer would have to foot the bill of the new program. Joining Parisi in objecting to the bill was Tim Ryan of the Superintendents Association.

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### [Senate/House Contacts](#)

To view a list of all 38 Senate members, including mail, phone and e-mail contact information, [click here](#).

To view a list of all 75 House members, including mail, phone and e-mail contact information, [click here](#).

This contact information will also be posted at the RIFTHP website at [www.RIFTHP.org/GAInfo](http://www.RIFTHP.org/GAInfo).

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