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# SMITH HILL REPORT



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## Unemployment Insurance Bill Challenged

The RIFTHP joined the AFL-CIO and the Teamsters Union in opposition to a bill to change the definition of a seasonal employee under Rhode Island's Unemployment Insurance law. The bill, [H5479](#) by Rep. Joy Hearn, was introduced on behalf of the Providence Chamber of Commerce. The bill would define as a seasonal workers as those workers who are employed for a period of less than 20 weeks, thus making them ineligible for unemployment insurance benefits. Such seasonal employment would not count towards calculating benefits if the worker was laid off from another position, thus reducing or eliminating the ability of some to collect benefits.

RIFTHP lobbyist James Parisi attended the March 9<sup>th</sup> bill hearing in the House Labor Committee and testified that adjunct faculty members would be ineligible for unemployment benefits because their employment is on a semester basis, and semesters are less than twenty weeks. While most adjunct faculty members have other employment and would not be eligible for benefits because of such employment, there are a small number whose position as adjunct faculty is their primary employment. These professionals would lose eligibility under the proposed law. No action was taken on the bill.

## At the Statehouse This Week

[Article 3](#) – The RIFTHP will be testifying in support of the Governor's public higher education tuition reduction plan in the House Finance Committee on March 15<sup>th</sup>.

The RIFTHP will be testifying in support of [H5593](#) which would require that the contractual provisions contained in an otherwise expired collective bargaining agreement with certified school teachers and municipal employees would continue until a successor agreement has been reached between the parties in the House Labor Committee on March 16<sup>th</sup>.

## Bill Introductions

### **Tuition Equity**

([S0466](#) *Quezada, Senate Finance*)

The RIFTHP supports this act which would create the "student equal economic opportunity act" which would allow students who meet certain requirements to be exempt from paying nonresident tuition at Rhode Island universities, colleges or community colleges.

## **Resolution on DSP Wage Increase**

([S0471](#) *DiPalma, Senate Finance*)

The RIFTHP supports this resolution in which the General Assembly requests the EOHHS to implement an increase in the base-payment rates for Direct Support Professionals (DSP) and home-care service providers of not less than \$15 per hour by fiscal year 2022. The rate shall be adjusted annually by a percentage increase equal to the Consumer Price Index for Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers (CPI-W) or a successor index as calculated for the northeast region by the US Department of Labor.

## **Municipal Employee Binding Arbitration**

([H5313](#) *Bennett, House Labor*)

The RIFTHP supports this act which would grant municipal employees the right to binding arbitration on financial issues in addition to all other issues under the current binding arbitration law. It would also allow existing contract language to continue to apply even after its expiration under certain conditions.

## **School Social Worker Data Collection**

([H5325](#) *Kazarian, House Health Education and Welfare*)

This act would create a process for the department of education relating to the collection and organization of information concerning the workload and scope of the duties and responsibilities performed by school social workers.

## **Constitutional Amendment – Line Item Veto**

([H5332](#) *Lancia, House Finance*)

The RIFTHP opposes this resolution to approve and publish and submit to the electors a proposition to amend the State Constitution granting a line item veto power to the Governor.

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