

The

SMITH HILL REPORT



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Quiet Days at the Statehouse

During the past few weeks, there have not been many bill hearings on legislation that impacts RIFTHP members. Activity on bill hearings and hearings on budget articles will pick up once the Assembly returns to work after taking next week off. There have been a large number of bills introduced as the House and Senate bill filing deadline nears.

Silva Confirmed for RISLRB

Derek Silva, a Providence Firefighter and Vice-President of the Providence Firefighters Union, was appointed by Governor Raimondo to fill one of three Labor seats on the Rhode Island State Labor Relations Board. His appointment was confirmed when the Rhode Island Senate voted 32 to 5 on Thursday, February 15, 2018 to give Advice and Consent to his appointment.

Bill Introductions

World Language/Dual Language Education

[\(H7436\)](#) *Diaz, House Finance*

This bill would establish and require funding for a world language and dual language immersion program.

Alternative Education Programs

[\(H7497\)](#) *Vella-Wilkinson, House Health, Education and Welfare*

The RIFTHP supports this bill which would amend the law on the student suspension, by requiring the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education along with the Rhode Island Teachers' Advisory Council and a representative from the Attorney General's office to work cooperatively to create regulations and programs for students who have been suspended, or otherwise removed from a regular classroom setting. It would require the programs to include academic instruction and address the social and emotional well-being of the student. The bill

would also require public school districts and charter schools to employ sufficient social workers and other educational specialists to provide support to students assigned to the alternative programs.

Education Aid – Bonus for Meeting Goals

[\(H7546\)](#) *Marshall, House Health, Education and Welfare*

This bill would create the Education Achievement Incentive Bonus Program to be funded by an appropriation by the General Assembly to reward school systems that meet or exceed annual education goals and/or standards established by the Rhode Island Department of Education. The bonus would be in addition to any funds awarded pursuant to the state funding formula.

Student Cell Phones

[\(H7577\)](#) *Williams, House Finance*

This bill would direct the Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education to issue regulations restricting cell phone use by students in the public schools during the school day unless they are being used in connection with an assignment or curriculum.

Carbon Monoxide Detectors in Schools

[\(S2179\)](#) *Miller, Senate Finance*

This bill would require that effective January 1, 2019, all school buildings where students are in attendance would be required to have carbon monoxide detectors installed and maintained therein. The bill would also authorize the Fire Safety Code Board of Appeal and Review to promulgate rules and regulations to enforce the provisions of this requirement.

Constitutional Amendment – Right to Adequate Education

[\(S2181\)](#) *Picard, Senate Finance*

This joint resolution, if approved, would amend the State Constitution to provide that it would be the paramount duty of the General Assembly, the Department of Education, and other government agencies to provide Rhode Island residents with equal opportunities to receive an education that is adequate to permit residents to achieve a high level, effective January 1, 2019. The amendment would also provide for judicial enforcement of this provision.

Career and Technical Education Tuition Formula

[\(S2184\)](#) *Gallo, Senate Education*

This bill would provide that the Department of Education, in consultation with a workgroup composed of various stakeholders, would develop a funding formula for school districts sending students to career and technical programs outside their district.

Charter School Board Membership – Sending Districts

[\(S2186\)](#) *Sheehan, Senate Education*

This bill would authorize school committees to appoint one designee to the board of directors of the governing body of any charter public school where students who are residents of the school committee's district comprise at least five percent (5%) of the student body at the charter public school.

Start of School – Labor Day

([S2187](#) Raptakis, Senate Education)

This bill would require public schools, including charter schools, begin the school year on the day after Labor Day commencing in the school year 2019-2020.

Retirement Income Tax Exemption - \$15,000 to \$20,000

([S2200](#) Felag, Senate Finance)

This bill would increase the exemption for retirement income from state income tax from \$15,000 to \$20,000 commencing in 2019.

Tuition Equity

([S2206](#) Quezada, Senate Finance)

The RIFTHP supports this bill 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.

Retirement Income Tax Exemption - \$15,000 to \$25,000

([S2214](#) Pearson, Senate Finance)

This bill would create an exemption for taxable retirement income from certain pension plans or annuities of twenty-five thousand dollars (\$25,000) beginning on or after January 1, 2019.



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