

The

SMITH HILL REPORT



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

March 16, 2018

DSP Minimum Wage Hike

On Wednesday, March 14, 2018, the RIFTHP testified in support of legislation that would raise the minimum wage for Direct Support Professionals working with people with intellectual and developmental disabilities to \$15.00/hour in three years. The bill, [S2478](#) by Senator Satchell, would raise the wage in three different increments over time. The bill applies to those providing direct support to clients and those working for agencies that employ five or more staff.

RIFTHP lobbyist James Parisi testified before the Senate Labor Committee that the starting wage at the Trudeau Center has climbed on average ten cents/hour over the past 15 years. He said these poverty wages are causing many dedicated people to leave the agency, directly impacting the quality of care offered. He said that while the state passed some modest increases the last two years, pay rates are still alarmingly low and the General Assembly needs to consider a minimum wage to protect workers and ensure quality services for those cared for by these programs.

Emmanuel Falck of SEIU District 1199 and Bob Marshall of the RI Developmental Disabilities Council also testified in support of the legislation.

Bills on the Move

The following bills have passed the Committee process and the full chamber of either the House or the Senate. To be enacted into law, the bill must pass the same process in the other chamber before being sent to the Governor for approval.

Title 16 Study Commission

[\(S2339 DiPalma, Senate\)](#) Passed Senate 3/6/18 (vote 35-0-1)

This Resolution would extend the reporting and expiration dates of the special legislative commission to review and make recommendations regarding the updating, streamlining and ensuring relevance of Rhode Island General Laws Title 16 from March 1, 2018, to November 1, 2018, and said commission would expire on March 31, 2020.

Student Work Permit Education Program

([S2469](#) Gallo, House Labor) Passed Senate 3/8/18 (vote 33-0-3))

This bill would require children who seek a special limited work permit to successfully complete a worker rights' training program established and funded by the Department of Labor and Training.

School Carbon Monoxide Detectors

([H7041](#) McNamara, Senate Education) Passed House 2/27/18 (vote 74-0-1))

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.

Schools - Sunscreen Application

([H7158](#) Bennett, House) Passed House 3/14/18 (vote 68-0-7))

This act would allow students in public schools to possess and use sunscreen for personal use.

Bill Introductions

Sexual Assault – Position of Authority

([S2273](#) Nesselbush, Senate Judiciary)

This bill would define any act of sexual penetration or contact performed by an individual with supervisory or disciplinary power, or who is in a position of authority, upon a person nineteen (19) years of age or younger, as sexual assault.

Charter School Board Membership – Sending Districts

([S2342](#) Sosnowski, 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.

Civics Education

([S2345](#) Paolino, Senate Education)

This act would require the Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education to adopt a course of study on the nation's founding and related documents, including the Declaration of Independence, the United States Constitution, and the Federalist Papers.

Suicide Prevention and Mental Health Services

([S2346](#) Sosnowski, Senate Education)

This bill would have each public institution of postsecondary education establish a plan for addressing the mental

health needs of its students. Each institution shall develop policies aimed at identifying a student exhibiting suicidal behavior or tendencies.

Partial Reimbursement – Dyslexia Education Certification

([S2348](#) Sosnowski, Senate Education)

This bill would authorize a one-half (1/2) fee waiver to pay one-half (1/2) the costs of teachers in obtaining an International Dyslexia Association aligned graduate certificate in dyslexia knowledge and practice.

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

([S2364](#) Fogarty, Senate Finance)

This bill would exempt from state income tax the first twenty-five thousand dollars (\$25,000) a taxpayer received from pensions, interest income, 401k plans and individual retirement accounts, and the first fifty thousand dollars (\$50,000) for individuals filing a joint return. The qualifying amount would be subtracted from the taxpayer's federal adjusted gross income in calculation of the taxpayer's personal income tax.

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