

*The*

# SMITH HILL REPORT



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March 23, 2018

## **RIFTHP Support School Construction Bond**

On Thursday, March 22, 2018, the RIFTHP joined a chorus of school advocates in support of placing a \$250 million school construction bond on the November ballot. The bond proposal is in Article 5 of the State budget. Both Governor Raimondo and General Treasurer Magaziner also testified in support of the measure. At the House Finance Committee hearing, there was also testimony on Article 9, which contains revisions to the existing school construction law designed to provide additional incentives for communities to invest in school construction.

RIFTHP lobbyist James Parisi offered strong support for the bond, noting the lousy working conditions many public school teachers and school support staff have in dilapidated schools. While generally supportive of the funding incentives in Article 9, Parisi testified against several specific measures. He objected to increased state funding for charter school construction. He opposed a proposal to permit state school construction money to go to projects that are not dedicated solely to education. He also urged the committee to include enough new state employees at RIDE to manage the expanded school construction program.

To view a copy of Parisi's testimony, [click here](#).

## **DSP Lobby Day for Minimum Wage Hike**

Four members of the Center Employees Union went to the State House on Tuesday March 20, 2018 to advocate for a minimum wage hike for Direct Support Professionals working at programs that provide services to persons with intellectual and developmentally disabilities. They were lobbying in support of bills filed by Representative Evan Shanley ([H7680](#)) and Senator Adam Satchell ([S2478](#)). The AFT members were joined by members of three other unions in support of the bills.

To view a copy of the flyer they distributed, [click here](#).



Pictured Above are:  
Representative Evan Shanley with  
CEU members Anna Landolfi and Tom Moran

### **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.

#### **Joint Committee of the Repealer**

[\(S2302 Lynch Prata, Passed Senate\) \(3/22/18, vote 32-0-4\)](#)

This bill would create the Joint Committee of the Repealer to compile suggestions for repeal of statutes, regulations, and executive orders received from citizens, businesses, and government agencies, including, but not limited to, those that are not considered "business friendly", and those that are archaic and out of date. The committee would be in existence until December 31, 2024.

#### **Suicide Prevention and Mental Health Services**

[\(S2346 Sosnowski, Passed Senate\) \(3/22/18, vote 32-0-4\)](#)

This act 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.

## **Bill Introductions**

### **Partial Payment of Dyslexia Education Certification**

([S2373](#) *Sosnowski, Senate Finance*)

This Resolution would appropriate sufficient sums to pay one-half the costs of teachers in obtaining an International Dyslexia Association ("IDA") aligned graduate certificate in dyslexia knowledge and practice.

### **Study of Massachusetts Education Reform Act of 1993**

([S2503](#) *Pearson, Senate Education*)

This resolution requests the Rhode Island Board of Education to conduct a comprehensive review of the Massachusetts Education Reform Act (MERA) of 1993 and provide recommendations to improve Rhode Island's overall education standards and governance.

### **Student Cell Phones**

([S2504](#) *Quezada, Senate Education*)

These bills 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.

### **Charter School Student Demographics**

([S2505](#) *Pearson, Senate Education*)

([H7711](#) *Amore, House Health, Education and Welfare*)

These bills 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.

### **World Language / Dual Language Education**

([S2506](#) *Ciccone, Senate Education*)

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

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

([H7656](#) *Canario, House Finance*)

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

### **Constitutional Amendment – Right to Adequate Education**

([H7696](#) *Messier, House Finance*)

This amendment to the Constitution of the state, if approved, would 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

at high levels, effective January 1, 2019. This amendment would also provide for judicial enforcement of this provision.

### **Education Funding – State Lottery**

([H7818](#) Ucci, House Finance)

This bill would direct profits from the state lottery into an education aid restricted receipt account to be disbursed as state aid to education.

### **School Substance Abuse Education Trust Fund**

([H7869](#) K. Fogarty, House Finance)

This bill would, through the amendments to several sections of law, govern the treatment of, and process for prescribing prescription drugs for persons who suffer from opiate abuse and related issues.

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