

The

SMITH HILL REPORT



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Duty to Report Streamlining

The RIFTHP testified in support of a bill introduced by Senator Maryellen Goodwin to streamline the reporting process to DCFY when school employees have information related to sexual abuse of a student in an education program. The bill, [S2353](#), was unanimously approved by the Senate Education Committee as the hearing concluded.

When introducing the bill, Senator Goodwin noted there had been issues with the recently-enacted law that needed to be addressed. There was a group of interested parties that worked on the issue, including the Providence Teachers Union President, Maribeth Calabro.

Current law requires any school employee to notify DCFY when they have “reasonable cause to know or suspect that any child has been the victim of sexual abuse by an employee, agent, contractor, or volunteer of an educational program...”. Her bill would designate an employee at each education program, who would then be responsible for contacting DCYF. This employee would normally be the Principal or other person in charge of the educational program. This simplified reporting process would avoid circumstances when more than a dozen persons have contacted DCYF on the same issue. Once a school employee makes a report to the designated reporter, it would be up to the designated reporter to contact DCYF. S2353 would also require the Commissioner of Education to provide guidance on the reporting requirement.

RIFTHP lobbyist James Parisi testified in support of the bill. He referenced issues with the current law, particularly in Providence and a few other districts, that necessitated a unified process of reporting. He also noted that statewide guidance and training would be beneficial to improving the reporting process. Also testifying in support of the bill was Providence Superintendent Chris Maher, DCYF and Peg Langhammer of Day One, an advocacy group for those affected by sexual abuse and domestic violence.

Selection of Arbitrator Bill Heard

The RIFTHP testified against a bill that would allow the Director of the Department of Labor and Training to designate arbitrators to resolve contract disputes for teacher, and municipal worker arbitration. The bill was supported by the League of Cities and Towns. [S2737](#) was heard by the Senate Labor Committee on Wednesday, April 11th. A similar bill was heard in the House Labor Committee a week earlier.

RIFHTP lobbyist James Parisi testified against the bill. He argued that the bill changed the method of selecting arbitrators of contract negotiation disputes, but the bill proponents used examples of grievance arbitration. Union contracts, not state law, determine the process for selecting arbitrators of grievances. Thus, the bill did not resolve the situation raised by the Mayors in support of the bill. Parisi also told the Committee that people would have less confidence in the neutrality of an arbitrator if she/he was picked by a political appointee (DLT Director) instead of by using a process such as the one administered by the American Arbitration Association. Also testifying against the bill was the RI AFL-CIO, the RI State Association of Firefighters, and the International Brotherhood of Police Officers.

Medical Marijuana in Schools

On Wednesday, April 11, 2018, the RIFTHP submitted a letter opposing legislation to require certified school nurse teachers or their designee to administer medical marijuana in a school setting. The bill, [H8011](#), was heard in the House HEW Committee. Certified School Nurse Teachers throughout the state have raised objections to the bill. They work under a RI Department of Health nursing license in addition to a RIDE teacher certification. The nursing license would be jeopardized by the administration of medical marijuana because nurses are only able to administer FDA approved medicines. Medical marijuana, while approved by Rhode Island and some other states, are not approved by the Federal Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

To view a copy of the letter that the RIFTHP submitted, [click here](#).

Bill Introductions

School Social Worker Data Collection

([S2052](#) *Satchell, Senate Education*)

([H7685](#) *Kazarian, House Health Education and Welfare*)

These bills 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.

Carried Interest – State Compact

[\(S2072 Satchell, Senate Finance\)](#)

The RIFTHP supports this bill which would establish a nineteen percent (19%) carried interest fairness fee for investment management services in order to tax the carried interest income of hedge fund and private equity investors as traditional ordinary earned income.

Tax Equity

[\(S2075 Satchell, Senate Finance\)](#)

The RIFTHP supports this bill which would provide for the levying of a two (2%) tax increase on personal income over two hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$250,000).

School Field Trip Requirement

[\(S2113 Ciccone, Senate Education\)](#)

This bill would require that public schools of this state, beginning in kindergarten and continuing through and including grade twelve (12), would annually provide access for every student to at least one field trip to a nature preserve, reserve, or conservatory.

Schools - Sunscreen Application

[\(S2115 Miller, Senate Education\)](#)

This bill would allow students in public schools to possess and use sunscreen.

After School Program Funding

[\(S2119 Crowley, Senate Finance\)](#)

This resolution would authorize the appropriation of the sum of \$300,000 to the Department of Health for evidence-based after school programming for youth to decrease mental health concerns.

Education Aid – Regionalization Bonus

[\(S2664 Morgan, Senate Finance\)](#)

This bill would remove the language which provides for the reduction and elimination of the foundation education aid bonus that is given to regionalized school districts and would be phased out over a two (2) year period.

Out of School Time Commission

[\(S2347 Satchell, Senate Education\)](#)

[\(H7413 Casimiro, House Health Education and Welfare\)](#)

These bills would create a permanent joint commission to improve and increase the number of quality out of school time learning programs in the state.

Teacher Professional Development Funding

([S2514](#) Pearson, Senate Finance)

The RIFTHP supports this bill which would authorize the appropriation of ten million dollars (\$10,000,000) to the professional development investment fund for fiscal year 2019.

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