

The

SMITH HILL REPORT



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RIFTHP Members Mobilize Statewide for “No Kings” Rally



RIFTHP members from locals across Rhode Island participated in the “No Kings” event on Saturday, April 28, joining a broad coalition of community members to advocate for democratic values and push back against efforts that threaten public institutions and working families.

Charter Moratorium and Cap Reduction

RIFTHP is intensifying its campaign to stop charter school expansion in Rhode Island through its RI Communities First initiative, making clear that unchecked expansion diverts critical funding from neighborhood public schools and undermines stability for students and educators. Backed by billionaire interests, charter expansion advocates currently have more than a dozen lobbyists working the State House, while RIFTHP is mobilizing educators and communities to push back and demand policies that put Rhode Island students first.

The campaign includes a coordinated statewide communications effort with targeted digital ads, social media outreach, and both English and Spanish-language radio and newspaper placements to ensure families and community members understand what is at stake. At the same time, municipal leaders—including mayors, city councilors, and school committee members—have stepped forward to testify in support of a charter school moratorium and reductions to the charter cap, reflecting growing concern at the local level.

Members are urged to stay engaged and take action by emailing their legislators in support of the charter moratorium and cap reduction: [Email Your Legislators: Support the Charter Moratorium](#).

Members can also visit <https://ricommunitiesfirst.com/> to send a message to the Governor demanding he stand with Rhode Island communities over billionaire-backed charter expansion.

Continued member engagement will be critical to building the pressure needed to pass this legislation and protect the future of public education in Rhode Island.

Armed Campus Police

The House Education Committee heard testimony on [H 7128](#), legislation that would require public colleges and universities to arm campus police officers and extend Law Enforcement Officers' Bill of Rights protections to those officers. The proposal raises questions about campus safety, cost, and the role of law enforcement in higher education settings.

Testimony in opposition emphasized that arming campus police may increase fear among students and staff, particularly on diverse campuses, and does not necessarily improve outcomes in active shooter situations. Concerns were also raised about the significant costs associated with weapons, training, and liability, as well as the potential diversion of resources away from mental health services and other proven safety strategies.

RIFTHP-affiliated RIC/AFT Local 1819 submitted [written testimony](#) opposing the bill, raising concerns about campus climate, student trust, and the expansion of employment protections beyond those provided to other campus employees. RIFTHP lobbyist Jeremy Sencer also submitted [written testimony](#) in opposition.

The committee recommended the measure be held for further study.

No-Fee School Lunch Payment Option

The House Education Committee heard testimony on [H 8129](#), legislation that would require all school districts to provide at least one no-fee option for school lunch payments and require full disclosure of any transaction fees charged by payment platforms. The bill is intended to reduce unnecessary costs for families and improve transparency in how school meal payments are processed.

Supporters emphasized that transaction fees can create an added financial burden for families, particularly those already struggling with food insecurity, and that schools should ensure equitable access to meal programs without additional charges.

RIFTHP signed in support of the bill.

The committee recommended the measure be held for further study.

This Week

- On Monday, the House Health and Human Services Committee will hear a bill that allows children with developmental disabilities to continue receiving early intervention services through the summer before transitioning to preschool programs.
- On Tuesday, the Senate will consider a bill that expands access to in-state tuition rates at Rhode Island public colleges for eligible students who graduate from Rhode Island high schools.
- On Thursday, the Senate Judiciary Committee will hear a bill that requires campus police at public colleges and universities to carry firearms and expands their legal status under law enforcement officer protections.
- On Thursday, the House Education Committee will hear a bill that directs the state to establish a statewide anti-hazing policy for student athletics to improve student safety and accountability in school sports programs.
- On Thursday, the House Education Committee will hear a bill that prohibits colleges and universities from giving admissions preferences to applicants based on family connections to alumni or prior attendees.
- On Thursday, the House Education Committee will hear a bill that establishes new statewide standards and requirements for the use of technology to improve safety and security in Rhode Island schools.
- On Thursday, the House Education Committee will hear a bill that allows public schools to count days closed during a declared state of emergency as meeting required school calendar and instructional day mandates.

Bill Introductions

Third-Party Digital Platforms Study Commission

([HR 8345](#), Caldwell, House Education)

This resolution would create a special legislative commission to study the use of third-party digital platforms in public schools and require a report with recommendations to the General Assembly by April 2027.

No Local Resources for Federal Immigration Enforcement

([S 3116](#), Ciccone, Senate Judiciary)

([H 8347](#), Lombardi, House Judiciary)

These bills would prohibit state and local authorities from participating in federal civil immigration enforcement while allowing compliance with judicial warrants and court orders.

Appropriation for Rhode Island School for Progressive Education

([HJR 8355](#), Slater, House Finance)

This resolution would authorize a \$300,000 appropriation to the Rhode Island Office of the Postsecondary Commissioner to support the Rhode Island School for Progressive Education for fiscal year 2027.

Expanding Access to High-Quality Pre-K

([S 3147](#), Gallo, Senate Education)

This bill would establish a framework to expand access to high-quality prekindergarten programs for children ages 3 and 4 to improve school readiness statewide.

Questions

RIFTHP members with questions about the Smith Hill Report or our legislative agenda may reach out to RIFTHP Lobbyist Jeremy Sencer at (401) 273-9800 or at jsencer@rifthp.org.



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