

The

SMITH HILL REPORT



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

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General Assembly in Recess

The General Assembly was in recess last week due to the February break. It will resume business Tuesday, February 26th. This edition of the Smith Hill Report consists of bills introduced which represent important issues to RIFTHP members.

Bill Introductions

DSP Minimum Wage Increase

([H5338](#) *Shanley, House Labor*)

The RIFTHP supports this bill which would require certain employers who provide services to people with developmental disabilities to pay their employees no less than thirteen dollars and seventy seven cents (\$13.77) per hour commencing July 1, 2019 and fifteen dollars (\$15.00) per hour commencing on July 1, 2020. This wage increase shall be funded by increased appropriation(s) to the department of behavioral healthcare, developmental disabilities, and hospitals.

Teacher Bill of Rights

([H5366](#) *O'Brien, House Health, Education and Welfare*)

The RIFTHP supports this bill which would broaden the definition of "teacher" and create a comprehensive bill of rights for school teachers.

Teacher /State / Municipal Employee Pension Stipend

([H5373](#) *Messier, House Finance*)

([S0212](#) *Sosnowski, Senate Finance*)

The RIFTHP supports these bills which would provide for a stipend to retired teachers, state workers and municipal workers of three percent (3%) of the first fifteen thousand dollars (\$15,000) of pension benefits up to four hundred fifty dollars (\$450) to be awarded to retirees the month following the anniversary date of retirement when no cost of living adjustment (COLA) is scheduled for that year.

Tax Equity

([H5399](#) Kislak, House Finance)

The RIFTHP supports this bill which would add three (3) new income tax brackets for purposes of Rhode Island state income taxation. The new brackets would be a rate of 7.99% on taxable income over \$275,000 but not over \$500,000, a rate of 8.49% on taxable income over \$500,000 but not over \$1,000,000, and a rate of 8.99% on taxable income over \$1,000,000.

Dyslexia Training, Certification

([H5426](#) Quattrocchi, House Health, Education and Welfare)

The RIFTHP opposes this bill which would require all elementary and secondary public schools to provide screening for dyslexia and related disorders to their students and establish an appropriate plan for their treatment and/or education commencing in the school year 2020-2021. The bill would require all elementary teachers, reading specialists and speech language pathologists to be certified in Orton-Gillingham.

Board of Education Qualifications

([H5435](#) Amore, House Health, Education and Welfare)

The RIFTHP supports this bill which would provide that the chair of the Council for Post Secondary Education and the chair of the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education be elected by the council members. In addition, each member of the Board of Education would be required to have prior experience in a higher education position.

School Library Hours

([S0114](#) Miller, Senate Education)

The RIFTHP opposes this bill which would provide that the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education in setting standards for school libraries and services would at a minimum provide that secondary school students have access to libraries one hour before school, during school and for one hour after school.

K-2 Maximum Class Size

([S0199](#) Gallo, Senate Education)

The RIFTHP supports this bill which would mandate that public school classroom size be limited to twenty (20) students for kindergarten through grade two (2). Exceptions are made for emergencies and temporary situation not to exceed three (3) days and for mid-year enrollments when it would be impractical to assign the student any class but an existing class of maximum size.

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