
The

SMITH HILL REPORT



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Universal Pre-Kindergarten

On Wednesday, March 27th, RIFTHP President Frank Flynn testified in support of Governor Raimondo's proposal to expand Pre-Kindergarten. Her proposal is [Article 10](#) of the State Budget. The plan is to expand the opportunities currently offered to four year old students through the existing network of public schools, childcare centers and Head Start centers.

The bill creates a statutory goal of having seventy percent of Rhode Island four year olds enrolled in pre-kindergarten. The bill required the Department of Education to adopt regulations governing pre-kindergarten teacher certification, class size and ratios, learning time, learning standards, curriculum, support for special needs and English language learner students, professional development, assessments and classroom observations.

President Flynn testified in support of the proposal before a joint meeting of the Senate Finance Committee and the Senate Education Committee. He said *"THE RIFTHP fully supports the expansion of Rhode Island's nationally recognized, high quality pre-kindergarten model. This mixed delivery model which includes public schools, Head Start Centers, and classrooms in private child care centers will expand critically vital, early learning opportunities to numerous students who currently are unable to access them. It is our belief that providing high quality pre-k programs will develop the cognitive and social/emotional skills many of our neediest students require to succeed in school. The cost of this program will likely be more than offset by savings in future remedial services. All students deserve a fair chance to succeed in school and life."*

Education Funding

The House Finance Subcommittee on Education considered the FY 2020 education budget in a hearing on Wednesday, March 27th. The Governor's budget fully-funds the education aid funding formula, which includes about \$20 million more for public school districts and about \$11 million for charter school expansion. The education budget also includes operational costs for the RI Department of Education.

RIFTHP lobbyist James Parisi testified at the budget hearing. He offered support for the Governor's proposal to increase state funding for English Language Learners. He urged the Committee to begin the process of

reviewing the education funding formula to consider revision to the formula adopted almost a decade ago. Parisi voiced objection to the Governor's plan to charge sending districts for students sent to the Training School. He supported the additional FTEs (full-time equivalent) added to the Department of Education staff.

Parisi also called on the Assembly to budget state money for teacher professional development similar to the funding stream that the state had over 10 years ago in what was called Article 31 money. Parisi noted that as the Assembly considered curriculum frameworks legislation to improve instruction, the work would be for naught if the state did not invest in teacher professional development.

DSP Wage Increase

The House Finance Subcommittee on Human Services heard testimony on the BHDDH budget on Thursday, March 28th. RIFTHP lobbyist James Parisi and SEIU lobbyist Emmanuel Faulk testified in support of a significant pay increase for Direct Support Professionals at the hearing.

Parisi noted that DSP pay was flat for a decade before the Assembly cut \$24 million in funding to organizations that support the developmentally disabled. Parisi thanked the Governor for proposing a 41 cent pay raise, but asked the Finance Committee members to support a raise measured in dollars, not cents per hour.

The RIFTHP is working in coalition with the AFL-CIO, SEIU, UNAP and the IAM to support a major pay raise for DPSs in a campaign known as Demanding Dignity. Click here, demandingdignity.com, for more information about the campaign.

Bill Introductions

Teacher and Municipal Employee Contract Continuation

([H5437](#) *Vella-Wilkinson, House Labor*)

([S0512](#) *McCaffrey, Senate Labor*)

The RIFTHP supports these bills which would provide that the contractual provisions contained in an otherwise expired collective bargaining agreement with certified school teachers and municipal employees would continue until a successor agreement has been reached between the parties.

Higher Education Contract Continuation

([H5438](#) *Vella-Wilkinson, House Labor*)

The RIFTHP supports this bill which would require that the contractual provisions contained in an otherwise expired collective bargaining agreement with all full and adjunct professors at state universities and colleges would continue until a successor agreement has been reached between the parties.

Charter School Fiscal Analysis – Auditor General

([H5522](#) Barros, House Finance)

The RIFTHP supports this bill which would provide that the Office of Auditor General be responsible for analyzing and reporting the impact of new or expanded charter schools.

Community Schools Act

([H5524](#) Barros, House Finance)

([S0542](#) Cano, Senate Education)

The RIFTHP supports these bills which would furnish financial support for the planning and implementation of effective community schools that would provide students with equitable access to a high-quality education.

CPR Training for Teachers

([H5546](#) Filippi, House Health, Education and Welfare)

The RIFTHP opposes this bill which would require that teachers be trained and certified in cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR).

CPR/Emergency Training for Teachers

([H5559](#) Kislak, House Health, Education and Welfare)

([S0548](#) Archambault, Senate Education)

The RIFTHP opposes these bills which would require the Rhode Island department of education, within the next three (3) years, to create a plan where all Rhode Island teachers would be trained in the BEARS curriculum (BEARS training includes hands-only cardiopulmonary resuscitation, Heimlich maneuver, and bleeding control). The act would also provide that training time would count towards professional development. The goal would be to have eighty percent (80%) of Rhode Island teachers trained in BEARS curriculum by having refresher training every three (3) years.

Teacher Professional Development Funding

([H5574](#) Serpa, House Health, Education and Welfare)

The RIFTHP supports this bill which would restructure the professional development investment fund to assume duties of dissemination of curriculum materials aligned with curriculum frameworks, state assessments, and implement district professional development plans with an allocation of two hundred dollars (\$200) per student.

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