

---

*The*

# SMITH HILL REPORT



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

---

February 5, 2021

## **Charter Moratorium Campaign Announced**

The RIFTHP released an electronic advocacy campaign to allow RIFTHP members and all public education supporters to contact House and Senate members related to legislation that creates a moratorium on charter school expansion. The link allows individuals, after entering their name and address, to send a message to their Senator to support [S0013A](#) and their Representative to support [H5193](#).

[Click here](#) to access the campaign and send your message to your elected representatives.

RIFTHP President Frank Flynn explained the importance of the charter moratorium advocacy. He said, “The dramatic expansion of charter school seats recently approved by the K-12 council will have a devastating impact on the traditional public-school students in Providence and Central Falls by forcing those districts to cut programs and staff which are instrumental in providing a comprehensive quality education. This expansion will also have a potential economic impact on the education budgets of every other district in the state due to the State’s austere economic forecast. During the middle of a global pandemic is not the time to be expanding charter schools so we urge you to contact your Senators and Representatives and ask them to support this important legislation.”

## **Senate Charter Moratorium Vote Scheduled**

The Senate Education Committee voted 8-1 to support legislation to create a three year moratorium on charter school expansion. The bill, S0013A by Senator Maryellen Goodwin, has been scheduled for a vote in the Senate on Tuesday February 9<sup>th</sup>. The Senate is meeting at Sapinsley Hall on the Rhode Island College campus. The meeting is not open to the public. The meeting can be viewed on Capitol TV, which is broadcast on both Verizon and Cox , and also on the General Assembly website ([click here](#)).

## **Civics Education Requirement Considered**

On Wednesday, February 3<sup>rd</sup>, the House Education Committee considered legislation to require a course in Civics as a graduation requirement. The bill, [H5028](#) by Rep Newberry, would require the civics course as a

graduation requirement beginning with the class of 2025. The RIFTHP testified in support of the bill. RIFTHP lobbyist James Parisi testified that the RIFTHP has a long history of support for civics education and we support creating a graduation requirement for it in our public schools. Parisi asked that the bill be less prescriptive than the original draft, which would require a performance-based assessment in civics only as evidence of meeting the civics education requirement. The bill had widespread conceptual support. The House Education Committee voted to hold the bill for further study.

### **Callahan Reappointed to Board of Education**

RIFTHP Director of Professional Issues Colleen Callahan was reappointed to the Board of Education's Council on Elementary and Secondary Education by Governor Raimondo. She had served on the Board of Education's predecessor the Board of Regents. Her appointment is through January 2024. Dr. Callahan's nomination was considered by the Senate Education Committee in a hearing on February 3<sup>rd</sup>. The Committee unanimously gave their recommendation for advice and consent for her appointment. Her nomination will be considered by the Senate on February 9<sup>th</sup>. Also reappointed to the K-12 Council was NEA/RI President Larry Purtill. His term will also expire in 2024. Other appointments to the Board of Education considered at the Senate Education hearing were:

- Michael Mello (Council on Postsecondary Education) for a term expiring January 31, 2023.
- Marianne F. Monte (Council on Postsecondary Education) for a term expiring January 31, 2023.
- Jo Eva Gaines (Council on Elementary and Secondary Education) for a term expiring January 31, 2024.
- Dr. Jeffrey A. Williams (Council on Postsecondary Education) for a term expiring January 31, 2024.
- Rachelle Green (Council on Postsecondary Education) for a term expiring January 31, 2023.

### **House Committee Assignments Announced**

The House of Representatives announced committee chair positions and committee membership assignments late last week. The assignments were not made until last week because the House was considering changing the committee structure. The House changed several committees and created two new committees. The former Health Education and Welfare Committee was separated into two committees, the Education Committee and the Health and Human Services Committee. The responsibility for considering Housing issues was added to the title of the Municipal Government Committee. The Assembly also created two new committees, a Committee on Innovation, Internet and Technology and a Committee on State Government and Elections.

To view all House committee assignments, ([click here](#)).

## **Bill Introductions**

### **Charter School Expansion Moratorium**

([H5193](#) *O'Brien, House Education*)

This bill limits to the creation of new district charter schools, independent charter schools, and mayoral academies. Mandates state to not appropriate funding for charter schools. Creates a 3 year moratorium on new charter schools and charter school expansion.

### **School Field Trip Fundraising**

([H5079](#) *McNamara, House Education*)

This bill allows a school district to assess or request a voluntary contribution of money from a student or the student's parent or legal guardian to make a donation, in whole or in part, for the cost of district-sponsored field trips, dances, and clubs.

### **Schools - Availability of Feminine Hygiene Products**

([H5083](#) *McEntee, House Health & Human Services*)

([S0086](#) *Lawson, Senate Education*)

These bills provide that feminine hygiene products be provided in all public schools.

### **Student Possession of Sunscreen**

([H5164](#) *Bennett, House Health & Welfare*)

This bill allows students in public schools to possess and use a topical sunscreen product. Children enrolled in grades K-5 would need a note from a parent or guardian in order to possess sunscreen on school property.

### **Certified Nurse-Teacher Staffing Requirement**

([H5197](#) *Corvese, House Education*)

([S0087](#) *Cicccone, Senate Education*)

These bills require that only certified nurses-teachers may be employed as school nurses in elementary and secondary schools.

### **State Funding for Teacher Professional Development**

([H5208](#) *Serpa, House Finance*)

This bill restructures professional development investment fund to assume duties of dissemination of curriculum materials/frameworks/ assessments/ development plans with annual allocation of \$200 per student.

### **RI Promise Program Continuation**

([H5224](#) *Shekarchi, House Finance*)

([S0079](#) *Ruggerio, Senate Education*)

These bills remove the requirement that the scholarship program cease with the enrollment of the high school graduating class of 2021 at the Community College of Rhode Island.

### **Moment of Silence - 9-11**

([S0088](#) Raptakis, Senate Education)

This bill allows teachers in all grades to provide the opportunity for students to observe a brief moment of silence on every September 11.

### **Education Aid - English Language Learner Funding**

([S0090](#) Cano, Senate Education)

This bill adds to the determination of the need to support high-need students the following factor: Whether the student is an English language learner as defined by the Department of Education's regulations.

### **Follow Us**

The RIFTHP has a twitter account for legislative issues. If you are on twitter, follow us @RIFTHPL.

SIGN UP  
NOW!



register to receive the SHR directly, [click here](#).