



The

# SMITH HILL REPORT

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

## You Did It!

Thanks to over a thousand RIFTHP members who used our link to contact their Senator about the NECAP graduation requirement, the Senate Education Committee voted 7-2 ([click here](#) to see the committee vote) to place a three year moratorium on using standardized testing as a graduation requirement.

We need to keep up the pressure to ensure the full Senate supports students and the education community by approving Senator Satchell's moratorium legislation. The Senate is scheduled to vote on the bill this Wednesday, May 14. If you have not done so yet, please contact your Senator by using the following [link](#). You may add or edit the message drafted for your convenience. Time is of the essence on this important issue for our students.



Please support the testing moratorium on the use of the NECAP as a graduation requirement

The Rhode Island Federation of Teachers and Health Professionals strongly supports Senate Bill 2059 Sub A, which is currently under consideration before the Senate Education Committee. This bill would prohibit the NECAP or any other state assessment from being used as a graduation requirement until July 1, 2017.

The NECAP test was never designed to be used as a measure to determine a student's eligibility to graduate.

Take action now. Let your Senator know you support this bill by using the link below.

In order to address your message to the appropriate recipient, we need to identify where you are. Please look up and use your full nine-digit zip for the best results.

## DSP Rate Increase

The Senate Finance Committee heard testimony on [S2195](#) (DiPalma), a bill that would provide for the Department of Behavioral Healthcare, Development Disabilities and Hospitals (BHDDH) to adopt a state reimbursement system for community and non-profit agencies that would encourage the hiring and retention of competent, qualified, and caring individuals who work directly with the most vulnerable citizens of our state.

Speaking from both a personal and a professional

May 12, 2014

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perspective RIFTHP President Frank Flynn testified about the positive effect this bill would have on the 3800 members of Rhode Island's developmentally disabled community as well as the people who work in that community, such as the employees the J. Arthur Trudeau Center that the RIFTHP represents. Flynn shared his family's personal journey of trials and tribulations over decades of trying to find appropriate support and services for a child with disabilities. Flynn told of his brother, who had been in residential placement at the now closed Ladd Center for years and who later moved, during the deinstitutionalization process, to a group home in Middletown where he lived for over twenty years in a caring, supportive environment. Flynn said that, because of the work of the staff developing long-term personal relationships, providing social, recreational, work and vocational opportunities, his family often felt his brother had two families. Flynn went on to say these services are being provided by direct support professionals who work selflessly and tirelessly in agencies, residences and group homes throughout our state. Flynn talked about the passage of this bill and how increasing the reimbursement rate to \$13.97 per hour is not an exorbitant rate but is the target rate previously established by BHDDH in 2011. *"Even the \$13.97 rate is not commensurate with the value and responsibilities which are placed on these service providers"* - he told the Committee.

Lewis Kelley, President of the RIFTHP's Local 3726 Center Employees Union representing the workers at the Trudeau Center, talked about the lack of funding to support the people who live and work in the DD in his written testimony. Alluding to the 2011 General Assembly reduction of funding to the developmental disabilities system (only \$9.6 million was reinstated in 2012) Kelley pointed out that the low pay rate discouraged potential employees from taking work in the DD field *"because they can make more money working...at a fast food establishment."* For President Lewis Kelly's full written statement, [click here](#).

To see the time line of the Direct Support Professional (DSP) Rate History, [click here](#).

Others speaking in support of this bill were Service Employees International Union's (SEIU) State Director Emanuel Falk and several direct care employees of

Rep. John Carnivale,  
talks about contract  
continuation legislation  
and apprenticeship  
programs.

LaborVision is seen on Cox  
Ch. 14 and FioS Ch. 33

Tuesdays @ 7PM

Thursday @ 8PM

Saturday @ 5PM

the Blackstone Valley ARC, represented by the SEIU. Also speaking in favor of the bill and talking about the poverty wages that cause employees to resort to food stamps and other social services were Donna Martin, Executive Director of the Community Provider Network of RI and Thomas Kane, President and CEO of AccessPoint RI.

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## Pension Revocation

It has been close to a decade since the RIFTHP last testified against legislation that would treat public sector pensions different than private sector pensions and social security benefits by allowing pensions to be taken back, or revoked, if the pensioner commits certain illegal acts. This year, the RIFTHP repeated its longstanding opposition to pension revocation legislation by opposing [H8035](#) that would permit municipalities to stop pension benefits to municipal workers convicted of a felony who are serving a life sentence.

While one may not sympathize with convicted felons, all public sector workers lose when pensions are treated as a gratuity instead of a property right. To view all the arguments RIFTHP lobbyist James Parisi offered in his letter to the House Judiciary Committee on Wednesday May 7, [click here](#).

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## Coming Up

On Wednesday, May 14, at the rise, the [House Judiciary Committee](#) will hear testimony on [H8125](#) (Public Records – Administrator and School Employee Evaluations, Johnston) and the [Senate Education Committee](#) will hear testimony on [S2738](#) (Teacher Evaluation Frequency, Goodwin). Also on Wednesday, May 14 at 4:00 PM, [S2059A](#) (Standardized Test - Graduation Requirement - 3 Year Moratorium, Satchell) and [S2351Aaa](#) (Student Assistance Program Funding, Miller) will be on the [Senate Floor](#) for a vote.

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