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# SMITH HILL REPORT



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## Adjunct Faculty Medical Insurance

On Thursday, April 30, 2015 the Senate Committee on Health and Human Services heard testimony on RIFTHP legislation to provide medical insurance benefits to certain adjunct faculty members working at public higher education institutions. [S0233](#) by Senator Miller would provide medical insurance benefits to any adjunct faculty member who works at least 50% of the workload of full-time faculty. The RIFTHP represents the adjunct faculty members at Rhode Island College.

RIC/AFT Adjunct Union President Deborah Kaspin testified in support of the legislation. She provided important survey information that revealed that most adjunct faculty members would not obtain medical insurance if offered because they already are covered through other employment or as a retiree. She noted that based on a membership survey, approximately ten percent of those who are working at least 50% of the workload would enroll in medical insurance if offered by the College. This information refutes grossly inflated cost estimates provided by the Commissioner of Postsecondary Education. RIFTHP Field Representative Michael Mullane and RIFTHP lobbyist James Parisi also provided information to the Committee, including background information on compensation of adjunct faculty members.

[Click here](#) to view background information on the legislation.

## Charter Initiatives Heard

The Senate Education Committee conducted an

**May 11, 2015**

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extensive hearing on Wednesday, May 6 on a series of charter school legislation, including two RIFTHP initiatives. RIFTHP President Frank Flynn testified in support of the RIFTHP bills and a third bill that would amend the charter school funding formula.



[S0087](#) by Senator Satchell would require local approval of a school committee and city/town council prior to a new mayoral academy charter school opening. Senator Satchell, a West Warwick teacher, described the events surrounding a proposed mayoral charter school that could have significantly jeopardized the fragile financial condition of West Warwick. He informed the Committee that the Board of Education has been advised not to consider the financial impact to the sending school districts when voting on the creation of new charter schools. Frank Flynn offered testimony in support of the bill. He described the financial hardship new charter schools create for sending districts, a situation exacerbated by an unfair funding system that harms traditional public schools. He informed the Committee that there is currently a proposed school to be located in Woonsocket that lacks local support that may be approved by the Board of Education this spring.

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

**Tuesday @ 7PM**

**Thursday @ 7PM**

**Saturday @ 5PM**

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[S0700](#) by Senator Jabour would place all mayoral academy teachers and administrators in the state retirement system. The bill would change existing law that allows mayoral schools to opt out of the Employee Retirement System of Rhode Island. Flynn urged that all teachers be treated equitably by the State. He also described that pension costs are part of the education funding formula, and paying mayoral charter schools a per student cost while exempting the teachers from the pension system is a financial windfall to mayoral charter schools. When testifying against the bill, Jeremy Chiapetta of the RI Mayoral Academies informed the Committee that they offer teachers a 5% employer match into a retirement account.

President Flynn also offered testimony in support of [S0202](#) by Senator Gallo. This bill would amend the charter school funding system to cease payments to charter schools for programs and services that traditional public school districts provide that charters do not, such as out-of-district special education services. Flynn informed the Senate Education

Committee that the House Study Commission to review the fair funding formula had revealed numerous areas in need of correction.

RIFTHP lobbyist James Parisi testified in support of a fourth bill, [S0739](#) by Senator Pearson. That bill would freeze all funding to charter schools at current levels.

The bill would also require school committee and city/town council approval of any independent charter school or mayoral academy charter school. Parisi spoke about programs in traditional public schools that have degraded because of the need to pay rising charter school tuition.

The legislation to reign in charter costs was supported by the RI Association of School Committees. The RI Superintendent's Association, and several Cumberland elected officials. Opposing the legislation was the Rhode Island Mayoral Academy organization, the RI League of Charter Schools, administrators at several charter schools, a few charter school parents, RI-CAN, a corporate funded charter school advocacy organization, and RIDE.

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## Higher Education Budget Considered

On Friday, April 17 just before the spring recess, the House Finance Committee heard testimony on the proposed State Budget for higher education.

Governor Raimondo has proposed a 3.8% increase in state funding. After testimony from the staff and administrators, RIC/AFT Vice-President Quenby Hughes and RIC faculty member Tom Schmeling spoke of the need to increase state support of public higher education. Hughes described crumbling facilities and equipment on campus. She informed the Committee that RIC faculty earn less than faculty working at every other peer institutions in New England.

Schmeling informed the Committee that Rhode Island ranks near the bottom (44th to 48th, depending on the measure) in the country in its state support of public higher education. They described the significant number of hours Rhode Island College students work in order to pay for school. According to a survey, 31% of RIC seniors work thirty or more hours per week in off-campus jobs!

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## ACLU Discipline Report Issued

The ACLU has published a report to demonstrate racial and ethnic disparities in student discipline in Rhode Island schools. Legislation to address this issue has been introduced in the Assembly. To view the report, [click here](#).

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### Senate/House Contacts

To view a list of all 38 Senate members, including mail, phone and e-mail contact information, [click here](#).

To view a list of all 75 House members, including mail, phone and e-mail contact information, [click here](#).

This contact information will also be posted at the RIFTHP website at [www.RIFTHP.org/GAInfo](http://www.RIFTHP.org/GAInfo).

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