

The

SMITH HILL REPORT



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

February 2, 2018

Budget Appropriations Highlights

The budget proposal put forward by Governor Raimondo impacts RIFTHP members in a variety of ways. The RIFTHP will monitor and lobby Assembly members as they consider the proposal in anticipation of passage of a state budget in June. Among the appropriations proposed in the budget which are important to RIFTHP members are:

- **Education Aid.** The Governor proposed an increase of \$6.4 million in spending to local school districts. This increase is much smaller than the \$30 - \$40 million increases in the past years as the funding formula was implemented. This is the 8th year of the formula, and the first year with no additional money for underfunded districts. [Click here](#) to view a chart of education aid for each district.
- **Teacher Retirement Costs.** The Governor proposed an increase of \$5.5 million to cover the increased costs of teacher retirement. The state pays 40% of costs and districts pay 60% of costs.
- **Higher Education Funding.** The Governor proposed a \$5.2 million increase to public higher education institutions, which includes \$3.6 million to fund the second year of the RI Promise Scholarship.
- **State Employee Raises.** Consistent with past budget bills, there is no money allocated for pay raises for state workers. State employee unions are in the process of negotiating contracts, most of which expired last July. Any negotiated raises require adjustments in state revenue or cuts in proposed state funding.
- **Developmental Disabilities Funding.** During the past two years, the state budget has included additional money dedicated to those serving people with developmental disabilities. There was no proposed increase this year. Instead, the Governor has proposed an \$18 million reduction for DD services.

Substance Abuse Prevention Funding

On Thursday February 1st, the Senate Judiciary Committee heard testimony on [S2025](#) (Seveney). The bill directs certain fines paid for moving violations and marijuana possession to BHDDH to fund substance abuse prevention programs. The RIFTHP represents Student Assistance Counselors who work throughout the State providing these services to students in 47 secondary schools.

RIFTHP lobbyist James Parisi testified in support of the bill. He informed the Committee that the program has been around for decades but the State has not provided increased funding. Due to increased costs put on school districts, many school drug prevention program staff positions have been cut from full-time to part-time, and has caused other schools to drop the program entirely. As Rhode Island and other states deal with the opioid crisis, this program is now more important than ever. Parisi also commented on the challenges caused by low pay for those working in the program. Also testifying in support of the bill were Sarah Dinklage who runs the program, and several members of the prevention community. The Committee will continue to investigate the fiscal impact of the legislation and held the bill for further study.

Silva Named to Labor Board

The Rhode Island State Labor Relations Board governs all public sector labor relations in the state. The Board is responsible for running union elections, determining appropriate bargaining units, and investigating Unfair Labor Practice charges. The Board consists of seven members appointed by the Governor, three representing labor, three representing management, and one member of the public. There has been a vacancy on the Board created by the death of Frank Montanaro last summer. Frank Montanaro was former President of the RI AFL-CIO and the RI State Association of Firefighters.

On January 24, 2018, the Governor appointed Derek Silva to serve on the RI State Labor Relations Board. Silva is a Providence Firefighter and Vice President of the Providence Firefighters Union. His nomination will be considered by the Senate Labor Committee and is subject to the advice and consent of the Senate. Silva would join two other labor members, former RIFTHP President Marcia Reback and Scott Duhamel of the Painters Union.

Bill Introductions

Healthcare Facility – Mandatory Overtime

[\(H7273 O'Brien, House Labor\)](#)

This bill would broaden the definition of "employee" for the purposes of health care facilities staffing. In addition to nurses, employees would include assistants and technologists providing direct medical care to patients. This act would also allow a person's union or association to file an appeal from the administrator to the personnel appeal board.

Education Funding – School Facility Maintenance and Repair

[\(H7282 Shanley, House Finance\)](#)

This bill would require any municipality which receives state educational aid pursuant to the foundation education aid to allocate at least ten percent (10%) of the state's share to the maintenance, repair, renovation and/or construction of the school facilities.

Retirement Income Tax Exemption - \$15,000 to \$30,000

[\(H7293\)](#) *McNamara, House Finance*

This bill would increase the exemption for retirement income from state income tax from \$15,000 to \$30,000 commencing in 2019.

School Administrator Certification – Waiver Prohibition

[\(H7296\)](#) *McLaughlin, House Health, Education and Welfare*

This bill would require that school superintendents, principals, vice principals, directors and administrators of public schools as well as all charter schools hold state certificates of qualification and would prohibit the granting of any waivers.

Sexual Assault – Ages 14-18 – Custodial Care

[\(H7335\)](#) *Marszalkowski, House Judiciary*

This bill would make it illegal for any custodian of a child to engage in sexual penetration or sexual contact with any child under their supervision if said child is between the ages of fourteen (14) and eighteen (18).

State Employees – One-Time 3% COLA

[\(H7350\)](#) *Ucci, House Finance*

The RIFTHP supports this bill which would award a one-time three percent (3%) cost-of-living adjustment to all state pension recipients retired on or before July 1, 2018.

State Retirement Contribution – Maintenance of Effort

[\(H7357\)](#) *Handy, House Finance*

The RIFTHP supports this bill which would require the yearly state contribution to the pension system not be reduced until the fund ratio meets or exceeds eighty percent (80%).

Civics Education

[\(H7370\)](#) *Newberry, House Health, Education and Welfare*

This bill would require the commissioner of elementary and secondary education to adopt a course of study on the nation's founding and related documents, including the Declaration of Independence, the United States Constitution, and the Federalist Papers.

Teacher and Municipal Worker Binding Arbitration

[\(H7379\)](#) *Vella-Wilkinson, House Labor*

The RIFTHP supports this bill which would make the arbitrator's decision binding on all matters pertaining to certified public school teachers and municipal employees, including those matters involving the expenditure of money.

Care of Medically Fragile Students

[\(H7410 Amore, House Health, Education and Welfare\)](#)

This bill would establish standards of practice for providers of clinical nursing services for medically-fragile students. This act would also allow medically-fragile students to access clinical nursing services at home when the child's absence from school is related to their life-threatening medical condition or is otherwise a health-related absence.

SIGN UP
NOW!



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