

The

SMITH HILL REPORT



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RIFTHP Endorses Regunberg for Lieutenant Governor

The RIFTHP Executive Council has made its first endorsement of this election cycle by voting to endorse Representative Aaron Regunberg for Lieutenant Governor. Regunberg is challenging incumbent Democrat Dan McKee in a primary election to be held on Wednesday, September 12, 2018. To view the press release announcing the endorsement, [click here](#).

RIFTHP Objects to Certification Changes.

The Rhode Island Council on Elementary and Secondary Education is considering major changes to teacher certification regulations. The Council will consider draft changes in future meetings and may vote to put proposed changes out for public hearing in the Fall. While the initial proposal has not been adopted for public hearing, it is available by [clicking here](#).

At the May 15, 2018 Council on Elementary and Secondary Education meeting, RIFTHP President Frank Flynn offered several objections to the draft proposal. He and other RIFTHP members will have additional opportunities to raise issues with the draft regulatory changes at future meetings.

President Flynn's first objection was to a proposal that would require all districts to report to RIDE all issues of discipline of teachers for performance based or fitness reasons. Flynn told the Council that RIDE is not the HR Department for the State, and that discipline issues are personnel matters. He also argued that this requirement infringes on a teacher's right to due process and is a substantial overreach.

In the short time the Council provided for public comment, Flynn also addressed the proposed onerous process for a teacher in a traditional program to gain certification, including a one-year residency. He compared that to another proposed certification provision that creates an alternative pathway which clearly circumvents the one-year residency requirement for certain candidates based on vaguely defined criteria. As drafted, the RIDE proposal will force a student at RIC, URI or PC to jump through a myriad of hoops to

become a certified teacher while allowing a district to hire a non-education major from the same school such as a TFA candidate who would be granted a certification for up to seven years without meeting the same requirements.

RIFTHP Supports Charter Approval Revision

Representative Jean Philippe Barros submitted legislation that would require the Auditor General to do a fiscal and programmatic analysis of any proposed new charter school or a propose charter school expansion. Currently, RIDE performs that function prior to the Council on elementary and secondary Education voting on the proposal.

The proposed Achievement First charter school expansion in late 2016 highlighted the need for the bill. RIDE utilized some consultants to do an analysis, who failed to consider the loss of education funding in traditional Providence schools should Achievement First expand. Instead, RIDE theorized that charter school graduates would make more money than non-charter graduates to support the charter expansion. This so-called analysis was a blatant circumvention of law.

Barros' legislation, [H7885](#), was heard by the House Finance Committee on Tuesday, May 15th. To view a copy of the letter RIFTHP lobbyist James Parisi submitted in support of the bill, [click here](#).

Bill Introductions

Career and Technical Education Student Internships

[\(S2349 Lombardo, Senate Education\)](#)

This bill would permit children between sixteen (16) and eighteen (18) years of age, and in their junior or senior year who are attending career and technical education centers, to participate in career and technical internships or teacher supervised job site training programs at or through said education center; provided, that the students are deemed to have the necessary educational background, experience and maturity.

Charter School Student Demographics

[\(S2505 Pearson, Senate Education\)](#)

This bill would require charter school populations to reflect the combined demographics of the sending district(s) in terms of special education, English Language Learners, and students who qualify for free and reduced-price lunch.

School Construction Reimbursement Revisions

([S2855](#) Gallo, Senate Finance)

This bill would temporarily expand incentives to enhance the school housing aid ratio to encourage new school and renovation projects. School districts would be eligible for share ratio increases for projects that address health and safety deficiencies, specific high-demand subject areas, replacing and consolidating facilities. Charter schools would also be eligible to receive these new incentives and would receive an increase in their minimum share. The bill mirrors Governor Raimondo's proposed Budget Article 9.

Investments – Privately-Operated Municipal Pension Plans

([H8125](#) Maldonado, House Finance)

This bill would create the "Rhode Island Closed Municipal Retirement Plans Trust Fund Act" to streamline the process for locally administered municipal retirement plans to join the municipal employees' retirement system (MERS) of the state of Rhode Island, by providing greater flexibility in funding policies than would otherwise be required, depending upon the needs and circumstances of each municipal plan. This act would also enable eligible municipal governmental entities to allow the State Investment Commission, in conjunction with the Office of the General Treasurer, to invest the assets of eligible municipal plans closed to new participants, in order to maximize the efficient and cost-effective investment of such assets, as well as to improve their safety and liquidity.

St. Joseph Pension Settlement Release

([H8166](#) Shekarchi, House Health, Education and Welfare)

This bill would provide that in connection with judicially approved good faith settlements of claims relating to the St. Joseph Health Services of Rhode Island Retirement Plan, a release by a claimant of one joint tortfeasor shall not discharge other joint tortfeasors unless the release so provides, but shall reduce the claim against the other joint tortfeasors in the amount of the consideration paid.

Community Service Requirement

([H8168](#) Tobon, House Health, Education and Welfare)

This bill would require all students to perform a minimum amount of community service each school year and would grant them the option to perform certain forms of community service for academic credit.

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