

April 27, 2018

Legislative Press Bureau at (401) 528-1743

THIS WEEK AT THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

STATE HOUSE — Here are the highlights from news and events that took place in the General Assembly this week. For more information on any of these items visit <http://www.rilegislature.gov/pressrelease>



- **Senate passes Goodwin bill to strengthen sexual abuse reporting law**
The Senate approved legislation ([2018-S 2353](#)) sponsored by Senate Majority Whip Maryellen Goodwin (D-Dist. 1, Providence) to clarify the circumstances in which school employees should raise a flag about possible sexual abuse, and would also designate school principals and headmasters — or another leader designated by the school — as the person who should make the report. The bill also calls upon the Department of Education to issue policies and procedures for handling abuse reports, which could include training for school officials so they are well-equipped to determine when and how to report.
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Senate passes Gallo legislation to improve safety at public schools**
The Senate passed legislation ([2018-S 2639A](#)) introduced by Sen. Hanna M. Gallo (D-Dist. 27, Cranston, West Warwick) that would codify the existence of the Rhode Island School Safety Committee into state law, and require that school districts provide the committee with safety assessments every three years for review and recommendations. The measure now moves to the House of Representatives, which passed similar legislation ([2018-H 7694A](#)) introduced by Speaker of the House Nicholas A. Mattiello (D-Dist. 15, Cranston).
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Rep. Diaz, Sen. Ciccone bill would create dual language immersion program**
Rep. Grace Diaz (D-Dist. 11, Providence) and Sen. Frank A. Ciccone III (D-Dist. 7, Providence, North Providence) have introduced legislation ([2018-H 7436](#), [2018-S 2506](#)) that would establish and require funding for a world language and dual

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language immersion program in Rhode Island. Dual language immersion is a method of instruction that promotes a student's full proficiency in all aspects of English and another language. DLI programs educate students using both English and a partner language for academic instruction and may divide the day by language of instruction. [Click here to see news release.](#)

- **Regunberg lauds executive order mirroring net neutrality legislation**
Rep. Aaron Regunberg (D-Dist. 4, Providence) praised Gov. Gina Raimondo's signing of an executive order similar to legislation ([2018-H 7422](#), [2018-S 2008](#)) he and Sen. Louis DiPalma (D-Dist. 12, Middletown, Newport, Tiverton, Little Compton) introduced to maintain net neutrality in Rhode Island. [Click here to see news release.](#)
- **With students' help, Rep. Ranglin-Vassell seeks better high school science labs**
Students from E-Cubed Academy in Providence testified before the House Health, Education and Welfare Committee for legislation ([2018-H 7974](#)) they helped draft to require every public high school in Rhode Island to be equipped with a functional science lab. They developed the bill through their involvement in the Generation Citizen program, and Rep. Marcia Ranglin-Vassell (D-Dist. 5, Providence), who is a teacher at E-Cubed, introduced it on their behalf. [Click here to see news release.](#)
- **House Minority Leader Morgan demands reduction in utility rates**
House Minority Leader Patricia L. Morgan (R-Dist. 26, West Warwick, Coventry, Warwick) testified before the House Committee on Corporations about reducing utility rates across Rhode Island. Her bill ([2018-H 7628](#)) calls on public utility providers in Rhode Island to decrease their rates based on the savings they will receive from the lower federal tax rate to ensure the savings are passed on to customers. [Click here to see news release.](#)
- **House Judiciary Committee takes hours of testimony on gun legislation**
The House Judiciary Committee took testimony on a variety of bills related to firearms at a hearing that lasted until the early morning hours. Among the bills heard were the Safe Schools Act ([2018-H 7591](#)), sponsored by Rep. Katherine S. Kazarian (D-Dist. 63, East Providence) to restrict firearms possession at schools to law enforcement and approved individuals; and legislation ([2018-H 7766](#)) sponsored by Rep. Jason Knight (D-Dist. 67, Barrington, Warren) to ban assault weapons and high-capacity magazines. Similar bills ([2018-S 2289](#), [2018-S 2493](#)) are sponsored in the Senate by Sen. Harold M. Metts (D-Dist. 6, Providence) and Sen. Joshua Miller (D-Dist. 28, Cranston, Providence), respectively. [Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Senator Metts bills seek vaccination choices**
Sen. Harold M. Metts (D-Dist. 6, Providence) has introduced two bills aimed at giving parents more choice about vaccinations for their children. One ([2018-S 2405](#)) would let parents opt out of the requirement that students enrolled in public or private schools to be vaccinated against Human Papillomavirus (HPV) beginning in seventh grade. The measure ([2018-H 7576](#)) is sponsored in the House by

Rep. Sherry Roberts (R-Dist. 29, Coventry, West Greenwich). The other ([2018-S 2670](#)) is a resolution urging Congress to study whether vaccines are associated with an increased risk of autism, and to amend the National Childhood Vaccine Injury Act to require that patients and parents be given information regarding the risks and benefits of vaccinations, among other things.

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▪ **Rep. McLaughlin bill calls for 25% discount for seniors on water surcharges**

Rep. James N. McLaughlin (D-Dist. 57, Cumberland, Central Falls) has introduced legislation ([2018-H 7514](#)) that would provide that persons age 65 years and over who have a surcharge applied to water supplied to them for personal use and consumption would receive a 25 percent discount on the surcharge.

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▪ **Rep. Lancia concerned about relocating psychiatric patients to Training School**

Rep. Robert B. Lancia (R-Dist. 16, Cranston) is alarmed about plans to move some of the most dangerous psychiatric patients in Rhode Island to the Training School in Cranston. The state has spent \$7 million to retrofit the facility to handle patients from Eleanor Slater Hospital but some, including members of the state's correctional community, have raised concerns that it may not be enough. They argue that psychiatric patients suffering from mental illnesses are much more difficult to control and that the facility itself may not be adequate to hold them no matter how much is spent to upgrade it.

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