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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 OKs Picard bill seeking constitutional right to adequate education**
The Senate passed legislation ([2023-S 0072](#)) sponsored by Sen. Roger A. Picard (D-Dist. 20, Woonsocket, North Smithfield) to place a question on the next statewide ballot asking voters to amend the state constitution to guarantee “an equitable, adequate and meaningful education to each child.” Such a constitutional guarantee would ensure that systems that are failing children are addressed because the guarantee would be legally enforceable. The bill now goes to the House, where Rep. Mary Duffy Messier (D-Dist. 62, Pawtucket) is sponsoring companion legislation ([2023-H 5771](#)).
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **House OKs McEntee bill extending outdoor dining at restaurants**
The House of Representatives passed legislation ([2023-H 5264A](#)) introduced by Rep. Carol Hagan McEntee (D-Dist. 33, South Kingstown, Narragansett) that would extend the law that allows restaurants to continue outdoor dining. The bill now heads to the Senate, where Sen. Alana M. DiMario (D-Dist. 36, Narragansett, North Kingstown, New Shoreham) has introduced similar legislation ([2023-S 0300](#)).
[Click here to see news release](#)
- **Senate approves bill to limit kindergarten-Grade 2 class sizes**
The Senate approved legislation ([2023-S 0177](#)) sponsored by Senate President Pro Tempore Hanna M. Gallo (D-Dist. 27, Cranston, West Warwick) to set a limit of 20 students for kindergarten through Grade 2 classes in public schools. The bill now goes to the House, where Rep. Robert E. Craven (D-Dist. 32, North Kingstown) is sponsoring companion legislation ([2023-H 5085](#)).

More...

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- **Senate OKs bill naming CCRI Newport for Paiva Weed**
The Senate approved legislation ([2023-S 0442](#)) sponsored by Senate Majority Whip Maryellen Goodwin (D-Dist. 1, Providence) to rename the Community College of Rhode Island's Newport campus in honor of former Senate President M. Teresa Paiva Weed, who was the Senate's first female president and its first female majority leader. She was a champion for CCRI's Newport campus, among many other things during a legislative career that spanned nearly 25 years. The bill goes to the House.
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Rep. Alzate introduces bill to turn commercial buildings into housing**
Rep. Karen Alzate (D-Dist. 60, Pawtucket, Central Falls) has introduced legislation ([2023-H 6090](#)) that would make it easier to convert commercial structures such as hospitals or mills into housing. The bill would allow, as a permitted use, the adaptive reuse of commercial structures, such as mills, factories, hospitals, malls, churches and schools, into high density residential developments without the need to go before a municipal planning board for a zone change.
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- **Rep. Cruz introduces bill to eliminate rental application fees**
Rep. Cherie L. Cruz (D-Dist. 58, Pawtucket) has introduced legislation ([2023-H 6087](#)) that would eliminate housing rental application fees. The bill states that a landlord, lessor, sub-lessor, real estate broker, property management company, or designee shall not be allowed to require or demand any prospective tenant to pay a rental application fee. Sen. Melissa A. Murray (D-Dist. 24, Woonsocket, North Smithfield) has introduced similar legislation ([2023-S 0311](#)) in the Senate.
[Click here to see news release](#)
- **Rep. Felix and Sen. Acosta introduce bill to reform solitary confinement**
Sen. Jonathon Acosta (D-Dist. 16, Central Falls, Pawtucket) and Rep. Leo Felix (D-Dist. 61, Pawtucket) have introduced legislation ([2023-S 0617](#)) that would establish an oversight committee to monitor the use of solitary confinement, lay out clear guidelines for when solitary confinement could be used and restrict its use to punishment for violent offenses. The bill would also prohibit solitary confinement, except in emergencies, for inmates with developmental or psychiatric disabilities. No one could be kept in solitary confinement for more than 22 hours each day.
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Sen. Lawson bill would protect seniors on Medicare from discrimination**
Sen. Valarie Lawson (D-Dist. 14, East Providence) has introduced legislation ([2023-S 0583](#)) that would prohibit insurers providing Medigap coverage from subjecting seniors to an underwriting process, denying them coverage or charging higher rates due to pre-existing conditions.
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Rep. Felix bill would promote transit-oriented development**

Rep. Leo Felix (D-Dist. 61, Pawtucket) has introduced a bill ([2023-H 6084](#)) that would create a pilot program to fund projects that build dense, mixed-use development around transit centers such as train stations and bus hubs.

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