

March 22, 2024

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 bill requiring safe storage of firearms**

The Senate approved legislation sponsored by Sen. Pamela J. Lauria (D-Dist. 32, Barrington, Bristol, East Providence) to require safe storage of firearms in Rhode Island. The bill ([2024-S 2202aa](#)) would require that all firearms, when not in use by the owner or another authorized user, be stored in a locked container or equipped with a tamper-resistant mechanical lock or other safety device properly engaged in order to render the firearm inoperable. The measure now heads to the House of Representatives, where Rep. Justine A. Caldwell (D-Dist. 30, East Greenwich, West Greenwich) is sponsoring companion legislation ([2024 -H 7373](#)). [Click here to see news release.](#)

- **Senate passes Cano bill to increase parental or family leave for Rhode Islanders**

The Senate passed legislation ([2024-S 2467](#)) sponsored by Sen. Sandra Cano (D-Dist. 8, Pawtucket) that increases the amount of parental or family leave available to an employee from 13 weeks to 24 weeks in any two calendar years. The measure now heads to the House of Representatives, where Rep. Joshua J. Giraldo (D-Dist. 56, Central Falls) has introduced a similar bill ([2024-H 7793](#)). [Click here to see news release.](#)

- **Senate passes Sen. Lawson bill to help local wineries**

The Senate passed a bill ([2024 S-2127](#)) sponsored by Majority Whip Valarie J. Lawson (D-Dist. 14, East Providence) that would allow wineries to sell up to three 5-ounce glasses and three 750-milliliter bottles per customer per day on site. The bill now heads to the House of Representatives, where Majority Whip Katherine S.

More...

Kazarian (D-Dist. 63, East Providence, Pawtucket) is sponsoring similar legislation ([2024 H-7720](#)).

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▪ **Bill would boost RI Works, link benefits to federal poverty level**

Rep. Arthur Handy (D-Dist. 18, Cranston) and Sen. Melissa A. Murray (D-Dist. 24, Woonsocket, North Smithfield) have introduced legislation to boost benefits for families in the RI Works program and link them to the federal poverty limit so their value keeps pace with the changing economy. The bill ([2024-H 7686](#), [2024-S 2337](#)), which is backed by a large coalition of community groups, aims to make Rhode Island's cash assistance and work-readiness program for low-income families with children more effective after decades of cuts that have resulted in an 83% reduction in the number of families assisted, compared to the program's start in 1996.

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▪ **Rep. Donovan, Sen. Ujifusa propose tax credit for family caregivers**

Sen. Linda L. Ujifusa (D-Dist. 11, Portsmouth, Bristol) and Rep. Susan R. Donovan (D-Dist. 69, Bristol, Portsmouth) have introduced legislation to help defray some of the monetary expenses faced by family caregivers. The bill ([2024-S 2375](#), [2024-H 7490](#)) would allow eligible Rhode Islanders who live with and care for an elderly or disabled family member to receive an income tax credit equal to 50% of the eligible costs that they incur, with a maximum credit of \$1,000.

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▪ **LaMountain, Voas bill would make it illegal to charge seniors for paper invoices**

Sen. Matthew L. LaMountain (D-Dist. 31, Warwick, Cranston) and Rep. Brandon T. Voas (D-Dist. 57, Cumberland, Central Falls) have introduced legislation that would make it illegal to charge fees to senior citizens for paper invoices. The bill ([2024-S 2278](#), [2024-H 7940](#)) would prohibit the charging of any fees to a person who is 65 years of age or older for a hard-copy paper bill, invoice or statement. The violation of this provision would be a deceptive trade practice subject to a \$500 fine.

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▪ **Cano, Alzate legislation would expand Medicare income eligibility**

Sen. Sandra Cano (D-Dist. 8, Pawtucket) and Rep. Karen Alzate (D-Dist. 60, Pawtucket, Central Falls) have introduced legislation ([2024-S 2399](#), [2024-H 7333](#)) that would expand income eligibility for the Medicare Savings Program, helping many lower income seniors and disabled residents to access the crucial health care that they need.

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▪ **Cano, Boylan introduce legislation to ban microplastics**

Sen. Sandra Cano (D-Dist. 8, Pawtucket) and Rep. Jennifer Boylan (D-Dist. 66, Barrington, East Providence) have introduced legislation ([2024-H 7515](#), [2024-S 2300](#)) to ban synthetic polymer microparticles — better known as microplastics — from Rhode Island, as well as direct the Department of Environmental Management to begin a statewide microplastic monitoring and reduction plan.

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- **Morales legislation to cap the cost of asthma inhalers heard in committee**
Rep. David Morales’s (D-Dist. 7, Providence) legislation ([2024-H 7518](#)) to cap the cost of prescription asthma inhalers for the insured to \$25 per month was heard by the House Committee on health and Human Services.
[Click here to see news release.](#)

- **Sen. Kallman, Rep. Cortvriend introduce legislation to ban ‘forever chemicals’**
Sen. Meghan Kallman (D-Dist. 15, Pawtucket, Providence) and Rep. Terri Cortvriend (D-Dist. 72, Portsmouth, Middletown) are sponsoring legislation ([2024-S 2152, 2024-H 7356](#)) to ban Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS), commonly known as “forever chemicals,” from products sold or manufactured in Rhode Island. PFAS are a family of chemicals used in everything from carpets, to frying pan coatings to firefighting foams that have detrimental health effects, especially for pregnant women and children, and have been shown to disrupt fertility and endocrine function.
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