

April 8, 2022

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 legislation on plastic, reusable bags**

The Senate passed legislation ([2022-S 2446](#)) introduced by Senate President Dominick J. Ruggerio (D-Dist. 4, North Providence, Providence) that would reduce the use of plastic bags by retail establishments by offering recyclable bag options and providing penalties for violations. The measure now moves to the House, where similar legislation ([2022-H 7065](#)) has been introduced by Rep. Carol Hagan McEntee (D-Dist. 33, South Kingstown, Narragansett). The Senate also passed legislation ([2022-S 2048](#)) introduced by Sen. Walter S. Felag, Jr. (D-Dist. 10, Warren, Bristol, Tiverton) that would repeal the sales tax on reusable retail bags. The measure now moves to the House, where similar legislation ([2022-H 7240](#)) has been introduced by Rep. June Speakman (D-Dist. 68, Warren, Bristol).

[Click here to see Ruggerio release.](#)

[Click here to see Felag release.](#)

- **House OKs McNamara bill to end ban on speech therapy for children over 9**

The House of Representatives passed legislation ([2022-H 7273](#)) introduced by Rep. Joseph M. McNamara (D-Dist. 19, Warwick, Cranston) that would end the practice of terminating speech language pathology in schools solely because the child has attained 9 years of age or greater. The measure now moves to the Senate, where similar legislation ([2022-S 2570](#)) has been introduced by Sen. Hanna M. Gallo (D-Dist. 27, Cranston, West Warwick).

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- **Senate OKs McCaffrey bill to redefine felonies and misdemeanors**

The Senate passed legislation ([2022-S 2367](#)) sponsored by Senate Majority Leader

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Michael J. McCaffrey (D-Dist. 29, Warwick) that would revise the state’s definitions of felonies, misdemeanors and petty misdemeanors — the latest step in an ongoing effort to reform the state’s criminal justice system through a “justice reinvestment” approach. The measure now moves to the House, where similar legislation ([2022-H 7355](#)) has been introduced by Rep. Leonela “Leo” Felix (D-Dist. 61, Pawtucket). [Click here to see news release.](#)

▪ **Senate passes Cano’s Early Educator Investment Act**

The Senate passed legislation sponsored by Sen. Sandra Cano (D-Dist. 8, Pawtucket) that would make critical investments in supporting, training and retaining early educators. The Early Educator Investment Act ([2022-S 2235](#)) directs the state’s Children’s Cabinet to set a target wage scale for early educators and identify strategies for increasing compensation. The bill is part of the Senate’s legislative package designed to expand and strengthen the state’s early childhood care and education system. Rep. Julie A. Casimiro (D-Dist. 31, North Kingstown, Exeter) has sponsored the legislation ([2022-H 7283](#)) in the House of Representatives. [Click here to see news release.](#)

▪ **House approves bill to protect elections cybersecurity**

The House approved legislation ([2022-H 7732](#)) sponsored by House Innovation, Internet and Technology Committee Chairwoman Deborah Ruggiero (D-Dist. 74, Jamestown, Middletown) in conjunction with Secretary of State Nellie M. Gorbea to authorize the secretary of state and the Board of Elections to conduct a cybersecurity assessment of Rhode Island’s elections system and create systems to protect future elections from cyberattack. The bill now goes to the Senate, where Senate Judiciary Committee Chairwoman Cynthia A. Coyne (D-Dist. 32, Barrington, Bristol, East Providence) is sponsoring companion legislation ([2022-S 2809](#)). [Click here to see news release.](#)

▪ **Senate passes Cano bill that increases parental or family leave**

The Senate passed legislation 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 bill ([2022-S 2243](#)) applies to every employee who has been employed by the same employer for 12 consecutive months. Rep. Joshua J. Giraldo (D-Dist. 56, Central Falls) has introduced the bill ([2022-H 7717](#)) in the House of Representatives. [Click here to see news release.](#)

▪ **Rep. Solomon introduces legislation to curb theft of catalytic converters**

Rep. Joseph J. Solomon Jr. (D-Dist. 22, Warwick) has introduced legislation designed to help curb the theft of catalytic converters. The bill ([2022-H 7751](#)) would require the purchaser of a catalytic converter to obtain a copy of the registration for the vehicle from which it was removed and provide a copy to law enforcement. [Click here to see news release.](#)

▪ **Rep. Vella-Wilkinson bill would make state websites more accessible to disabled**

Rep. Camille F.J. Vella-Wilkinson (D-Dist. 21, Warwick) has introduced legislation that would improve the accessibility to state websites for those with disabilities. The bill ([2022-H 8066](#)) would require all newly established public access websites to be

in compliance with the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Existing state websites would be required to comply no later than July 1, 2027, and municipalities would be strongly encouraged to adopt consistent standards.

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- **Bill would hold private colleges, universities financially accountable to host cities**
Surrounded by fellow Providence elected officials and a coalition of community members and student-led organizations at a State House event, Rep. David Morales (D-Dist. 7, Providence) and Sen. Tiara Mack (D-Dist. 6, Providence) called for passage of legislation enabling municipalities to tax properties owned by private colleges and universities ([2022-H 7956](#), [2022-S 2600](#)) and allowing host communities to impose up to a 2% tax on their endowments, to be used only for the host's public school district ([2022-H 7813](#)).

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- **RI Legislative Black and Latino Caucus unveils legislative priorities**
The Rhode Island Legislative Black and Latino Caucus unveiled its 2022 legislative priority list. The caucus is chaired by Rep. Karen Alzate (D-Dist. 60, Pawtucket). Among the bills highlighted was legislation ([2022-H 7938](#), [2022-S 2379](#)) sponsored by Rep. José F. Batista (D-Dist. 12, Providence) and Sen. Sen. Jonathon Acosta (D-Dist. 16, Central Falls, Pawtucket) that specifies and restricts the use of excessive physical force by peace officers and creates a civil action for constitutional rights violations.

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