

April 12, 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>



- **House passes six bills in Speaker Shekarchi’s housing package**
The House of Representatives passed six bills from the 2024 legislative housing package promoted by Speaker of the House K. Joseph Shekarchi (D-Dist. 23, Warwick), including three sponsored by the Speaker. The others were introduced by Representatives Joseph J. Solomon Jr. (D-Dist. 22, Warwick), Rep. Leonela “Leo” Felix (D-Dist. 61, Pawtucket) and Rep. Robert E. Craven (D-Dist. 32, North Kingstown). All six bills, which address the state’s housing crisis, now move to the Senate for consideration.
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- **Senate approves Murray bill limiting copays for diabetes supplies, equipment**
The Senate approved legislation ([2024-S 2082](#)) sponsored by Sen. Melissa A. Murray (D-Dist. 24, Woonsocket, North Smithfield) to limit insured patients’ copays for supplies and equipment used to treat diabetes to \$25 for a 30-day supply. The bill, now goes to the House, where Speaker Pro Tempore Brian Patrick Kennedy (D-Dist. 38, Hopkinton, Westerly) is sponsoring a companion bill ([2024-H 7364](#)).
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- **Senate passes bill to redefine felonies, misdemeanors and petty misdemeanors**
The Senate approved legislation sponsored by Sen. Jonathon Acosta (D-Dist. 16, Central Falls, Pawtucket) to revise the state’s definitions of felonies, misdemeanors and petty misdemeanors. The proposal ([2024-S 2100](#)) is an effort to reform the state’s criminal justice system by focusing on easing pressures on the correctional system and promoting diversion and rehabilitation while increasing public safety. The

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legislation now heads to the House, where Rep. Leonela Felix (D-Dist. 61, Pawtucket) has introduced the bill ([2024-H 7527](#)).

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- **House OKs bills that strengthen penalties for drunken, impaired driving**

The House of Representatives passed two bills introduced by Rep. Patricia A. Serpa (D-Dist. 27, West Warwick, Coventry). The first ([2024-H 7630](#)) would provide for a single, increased range of penalties for all driving offenses that result in serious bodily injury or death. The second ([2024-H 7631](#)) would extend the “lookback” period for repeat offenses involving driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs and for repeat offenses from five to 10 years. The measures now move to the Senate, where Sen. David P. Tikoian (D-Dist. 22, Smithfield, North Providence, Lincoln) has introduced companion legislation ([2024-S 2024](#)) to the first bill and Sen. Leonidas P. Raptakis (D-Dist. 33, Coventry, West Greenwich) has introduced companion legislation ([2024-S 2023](#)) to the second bill.

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- **House OKs bill allowing students to help with IEP physical education classes**

The House approved legislation ([2024-H 7561](#)) sponsored by Rep. Julie A. Casimiro that allows cities and towns to authorize “partner” programs to assist students with an individualized education plan (IEP) for specially designed physical education classes. “Partner” means any student who enrolls in a specially designed physical education class which is part of another student’s IEP to aid the student. The legislation would allow “partners” to receive physical education credits for helping another student during their APE. The bill now heads to the Senate, where Sen. Alana M. DiMario (D-Dist. 36, Narragansett, North Kingstown, New Shoreham) has introduced the legislation ([2024-S 2280](#)).

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- **House approves O’Brien bill to expand alcohol samplings at liquor stores**

The House passed legislation ([2024-H 7203](#)) sponsored by Rep. William W. O’Brien (D-Dist. 54, North Providence) that would allow liquor stores to offer unlimited free samples once during the month of August. Currently, unlimited samplings are only allowed once in March and November. The legislation now heads to the Senate, where Sen. Hanna M. Gallo (D-Dist. 27, Cranston, West Warwick) has introduced the bill ([2024-S 2698](#)).

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- **House approves Azzinaro resolution to create beach erosion commission**

The House of Representatives approved a resolution ([2024-H 7361](#)) sponsored by Rep. Samuel A. Azzinaro (D-Dist. 37, Westerly) that creates a special study commission to recommend remedies to stop beach erosion in Rhode Island. The purpose of the nine-member commission will be to make a comprehensive study and cost analysis in order to provide recommendations to remedy the erosion of Rhode Island’s beaches.

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- **House approves O’Brien bill to address teacher shortages**

The House of Representatives approved legislation introduced by Rep. William W. O'Brien (D-Dist. 54, North Providence) that would address teacher shortages in Rhode Island. The bill ([2024-H 7725A](#)) would allow the Rhode Island Council on Elementary and Secondary Education, upon application, to issue an emergency preliminary certificate to persons without examination for a period of one school year that may be renewed annually, for four additional school years. The legislation now heads to the Senate, where Sen. Jacob Bissaillon (D-Dist. 1, Providence) has introduced the legislation ([2024-S 2846](#)).

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▪ **House OKs Donovan bill to spread info about Type 1 diabetes through schools**

The House of Representatives approved legislation ([2024-H 7613](#)) sponsored by Rep. Susan Donovan (D-Dist. 69, Bristol, Portsmouth) to help protect children's health by providing information about Type 1 diabetes to the parents and guardians of all public school children. The measure now goes to the Senate, where Sen. Pamela J. Lauria (D-Dist. 32, Barrington, Bristol, East Providence) is sponsoring companion legislation ([2024-S 2516](#)).

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▪ **Legislators, advocates rally to protect libraries' freedom**

Rep. David Morales (D-Dist. 7, Providence), Rep. Jennifer A. Stewart (D-Dist. 59, Pawtucket) and Sen. Mark P. McKenney (D-Dist. 30, Warwick) joined the Rhode Island Library Association and the Rhode Island State Council of Churches at a State House event Thursday to call for the passage of two bills ([2024-S 2429](#), [2024-H 7575](#) and [2024-S 2281](#), [2024-H 7386](#)) to protect public libraries from partisan and doctrinal book-banning efforts.

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