

April 21, 2023

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 Majority Whip Maryellen Goodwin passes away**

The General Assembly this week honored the legacy of Senate Majority Whip Maryellen Goodwin (D-Dist. 1, Providence), who passed away Saturday after a courageous battle with cancer. Since 1986, she represented the Smith Hill neighborhood where she grew up, fighting fearlessly for the voiceless, vulnerable and underprivileged. Her leadership led to the passage of landmark laws improving lead poisoning prevention, the child care industry, domestic violence prevention, public safety, worker protections, access to health care, home care and nursing home safety, and much more.

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- **House passes Rep. Cruz's bill to eliminate rental application fees**

The House of Representatives unanimously passed legislation ([2023-H 6087aa](#)) introduced by Rep. Cherie L. Cruz (D-Dist. 58, Pawtucket) that would eliminate housing rental application fees. The bill is part of House Speaker K. Joseph Shekarchi's (D-Dist. 23, Warwick) 14-bill package of legislation to address Rhode Island's housing crisis. The bill now heads to the Senate where Sen. Melissa A. Murray (D-Dist. 24, Woonsocket, North Smithfield) has introduced similar legislation ([2023-S 0311](#)).

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- **House OKs bill to protect students' privacy when using technology for school**

The House approved legislation sponsored by Rep. June S. Speakman (D-Dist. 68, Warren, Bristol) to prohibit public schools, school districts or third parties such as software providers from activating or accessing audio, video or recordings from

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public school students' institutional or personal electronic devices. The legislation ([2023-H 5561](#)) now heads to the Senate, where Sen. Bridget Valverde (D-Dist. 35, North Kingstown, East Greenwich, South Kingstown) is sponsoring companion legislation ([2023-S 0702](#)).
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- **House Judiciary Committee approves Equality in Abortion Coverage Act**
The House Judiciary Committee House has passed the Equality in Abortion Coverage Act ([2023-H 5006](#)) introduced by Majority Whip Katherine S. Kazarian (D-Dist. 63, East Providence). The bill would ensure that individuals on Medicaid and state health insurance plans have coverage for abortion procedures. The legislation now heads to the full House of Representatives for consideration. Identical legislation ([2023-S 0032](#)) has been introduced in the Senate by Sen. Bridget Valverde (D-Dist. 35, East Greenwich, North Kingstown, South Kingstown).
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- **Rep. Donovan bill would require child-safe packaging for cannabis products**
Rep. Susan R. Donovan (D-Dist. 69, Bristol, Portsmouth) is sponsoring legislation to require all cannabis products sold in Rhode Island to use packaging that is child- and tamper-resistant, and that does employ imagery that typically appeals to children. The legislation ([2023-H 5486](#)) also prohibits such packaging from mimicking the look of non-cannabis products that appeal to children and requires packaging to contain, among other things, a label reminding purchasers to keep the product out of the reach of children.
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **DiPalma, Casimiro rally for better home and community-based care**
Sen. Louis P. DiPalma (D-Dist. 12, Middletown, Newport, Tiverton, Little Compton) and Rep. Julie Casimiro (D-Dist. 31, North Kingstown, Exeter) were joined by hundreds of Rhode Islanders impacted by insufficient funding for home and community-based programs for seniors, people with developmental disabilities and other Rhode Islanders who need care. They have proposed legislation ([2023-S 0782](#), [2023-H 5987](#)) to allocate \$200 million for home- and community-based providers of health and human services.
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- **Tanzi, Gu bills would replace CRMC with Department of Coastal Resources**
Rep. Teresa Tanzi (D-Dist. 34, South Kingstown, Narragansett) and Sen. Victoria Gu (D-Dist. 38, Charlestown, Westerly, South Kingstown) are proposing legislation ([2023-S 0772](#), [2023-H 6034](#)) to replace the Coastal Resources Management Council (CRMC) with a new Department of Coastal Resources, which would be similar in structure to the current Department of Environmental Management (DEM). The director of the new department would be a cabinet-level position that would be appointed by the governor, confirmed by the Senate and subject to the same accountability and oversight as other department heads.
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Rep. Place, Sen. Bell bill would create compact to phase out corporate giveaways**
House Deputy Minority Leader David Place (R-Dist. 47, Burrillville, Glocester) and

Sen. Samuel W. Bell (D-Dist. 5, Providence) have joined forces to launch an interstate compact ([2023-H 5319](#), [2023-S 0273](#)) aimed at limiting costly corporate giveaways used to lure companies from neighboring states.

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▪ **Batista, Mack: South Providence, Washington Park deserve say in development**

Rep. José F. Batista (D-Dist. 12, Providence) and Sen. Tiara Mack (D-Dist. 6, Providence) called on state leaders for more transparent community input and conversation, saying South Providence and Washington Park continue to be the targeted for unsafe, neighborhood-eroding proposals without input from the community, even after years of public recognition that the area has long borne an outsized share of the state's most burdensome development.

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▪ **Legislators celebrate re-opening of Wavemaker Fellow Program**

House Majority Leader Christopher Blazewski (D-Dist. 2, Providence) and Senate Majority Leader Ryan Pearson (D-Dist. 19, Cumberland, Lincoln) joined Gov. Dan McKee and Rhode Island Commerce to celebrate the re-opening of applications for the Wavemaker Fellowship program, a competitive student loan reimbursement program for professionals working in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics), certain design fields, and for the first time, the health care sector.

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