

May 5, 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>



- **House passes bills to streamline housing development appeals**

The House approved two bills included in Speaker K. Joseph Shekarchi's legislative package to help address the state's housing crisis. One ([2023-H 6083A](#)) sponsored by Rep. José F. Batista (D-Dist. 12, Providence) would phase out the State Housing Appeals Board, helping to streamline the often-lengthy appeals process for local comprehensive permit decisions. The other ([2023-H 6060](#)), sponsored by Speaker Shekarchi (D-Dist. 23, Warwick), would establish a housing and land use calendar in Superior Court to take over the handling of those appeals and other housing development appeals that already go through Superior Court. Both bills are intended to cut red tape in housing development.

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

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

- **Senate OKs program tapping Medicaid to house, assist homeless**

The Senate passed legislation ([2023-S 0277A](#)) sponsored by Senate Health and Human Services Committee Chairman Joshua Miller (D-Dist. 28, Cranston, Providence) to use Medicaid funds to pay one-time transitional costs to help people experiencing homelessness get into housing, and to create a pilot program of restorative and recuperative care for those experiencing homelessness to recover from illness, injury or medical treatment. The bill now goes to the House, where Rep. David A. Bennett (D-Dist. 20, Warwick, Cranston) is sponsoring companion legislation ([2023-H 5098](#)).

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- **Senate passes Gallo, Cano, DiMario child care package**

More...

Tuesday was Child Care Awareness and Early Care and Education Advocacy Day at the State House, with advocates, speakers, parents and toddlers gathering together to advocate for quality early learning. The Senate celebrated by passing a package of three bills. One ([2023-S 0482](#)), by President Pro Tempore Hanna Gallo (D-Dist. 27, Cranston, West Warwick), would create a centralized state Office of Early Childhood Development and Learning. A second ([2023-S 0492](#)) by Education Committee Chairwoman Sandra Cano (D-Dist. 8, Pawtucket) would instruct the state to establish benchmarks and a plan to increase salaries for early childhood educators. A third ([2023-S 0185](#)) by Sen. Alana DiMario (D-Dist. 36, Narragansett, North Kingstown, New Shoreham) would create up to five Early Learning Hubs across the state. All bills now move to the House.

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- **Rep. Felix bill to cover domestic workers in minimum wage law passes House**  
The House passed a bill ([2023-H 6084A](#)) sponsored by Rep. Leonela Felix (D-Dist. 61, Pawtucket) to ensure domestic workers such as housekeepers and care givers are covered by the state's minimum wage law. The bill now heads to the Senate where Sen. Dawn Euer (D-Dist. 13, Newport, Jamestown) has introduced companion legislation ([2023-S 0424](#)).  
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Senate passes Euer environmental justice bill**  
The Senate passed a bill ([2023-S 0770](#)) sponsored by Sen. Dawn Euer (D-Dist. 13, Newport, Jamestown) to create environmental justice zones throughout the state. Such zones would have an additional layer of protection from new polluting developments. The bill now heads to the House, where Rep. Karen Alzate (D-Dist. 60, Pawtucket, Central Falls) has similar legislation ([2023-H 6196](#)).
- **House passes Noret bill offering police officers options in mental health training**  
The House passed legislation ([2023-H 5881A](#)) introduced by Rep. Thomas E. Noret (D-Dist. 25, Coventry, West Warwick) that offers new training options for law enforcement officers in recognizing mental health issues. The bill would add the option of the International Certified Crisis Intervention Team training program to the existing requirement that the course of instruction comply with the certified National Council of Behavioral Health Mental Health First Aid Program. The measure now moves to the Senate for consideration.  
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **House passes Craven bill that seals dismissed court cases more quickly**  
The House passed legislation ([2023-H 5913A](#)) sponsored by House Judiciary Chairman Robert E. Craven Sr. (D-Dist. 32, North Kingstown) that requires automatic sealing of certain dismissed criminal case records at a faster timeframe. The bill now heads to the Senate, where Sen. Dawn Euer (D-Dist. 13, Newport, Jamestown) has introduced the legislation ([2023-S 0906](#)).  
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **House OKs McEntee bill ending statute of limitations on 2nd degree sex assault**  
The House passed legislation ([2023-H 5911](#)) introduced by Rep. Carol Hagan McEntee (D-Dist. 33, South Kingstown, Narragansett) that would eliminate the

statute of limitations for second degree sexual assault in criminal proceedings. The bill would also establish a 10-year statute of limitations for third-degree sexual assault. The legislation now heads to the Senate, where Sen. Mark P. McKenney (D-Dist. 30, Warwick) has introduced the bill ([2023-S 0736](#)).

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▪ **Sen. Gu, Rep. Spears bill would increase EMS funding**

Sen. Victoria Gu (D-Dist. 38, Charlestown, Westerly, South Kingstown) and Rep. Tina Spears (D-Dist. 36, Charlestown, Westerly, South Kingstown, New Shoreham) are sponsoring legislation ([2023-S 0516](#), [2023-H 6119](#)) to increase the Medicaid rate of reimbursement for ambulance services up to 90% of the rate paid by Medicare. Rhode Island Medicaid currently pays far less for ambulance services than other states and providers lose money on many services.

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▪ **Senators to submit package of transportation bills**

Several senators introduced a package of transportation and road maintenance bills. The bills are aimed at smarter road repair processes, assisting municipalities with repair of city and town streets, improving service and oversight of transit, and preparing for increased usage of electric vehicles.

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