

May 20, 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>



- **House passes Kazarian’s ‘Let RI Vote Act’**

The House of Representatives passed the Let RI Vote Act, sponsored by House Majority Whip Katherine S. Kazarian (D-Dist. 63, East Providence), to improve access and opportunities to vote in Rhode Island. The legislation ([2022-H 7100A](#)) expands voter access while ensuring the integrity of Rhode Island elections. The measure now moves to the Senate, which passed companion legislation ([2022-S 2007A](#)) introduced by Sen. Dawn Euer (D-Dist. 13, Newport, Jamestown). [Click here to see news release.](#)

- **House approves affordable housing bills**

The House approved two bills included in Speaker K. Joseph Shekarchi’s housing legislative package. One bill ([2022-H 7943A](#)) sponsored by Rep. Jacquelyn Baginski (D-Dist. 17, Cranston) would create a program for the repurposing of vacant and unused school and municipal buildings for affordable housing, and another ([2022-H 7948A](#)) sponsored by Rep. Brandon Potter (D-Dist. 16, Cranston) would create a weighted system for calculating each community’s percentage of affordable housing to assign credit based on how affordable each unit is, and to allow mobile homes to be counted. Both bills now go to the Senate. [Click here to see Baginski release.](#)
[Click here to see Potter release.](#)

- **Senate OKs bills to expand, strengthen early childhood care, education system**

The Senate approved a legislative package to expand and strengthen the state’s early childhood care and education system. The Rhode Island Prekindergarten Act ([2022-S 2680A](#)), introduced by Sen. Hanna M. Gallo (D-Dist. 27, Cranston, West Warwick),

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would add 1,700 new high-quality seats to the state prekindergarten program. A second bill ([2022-S 2678A](#)) introduced by Senator Gallo would create the Office of Early Childhood Development and Learning. The Child Care is Essential Act ([2022-S 2681](#)) introduced by Sen. Sandra Cano (D-Dist. 8, Pawtucket) would expand eligibility for the Child Care Assistance Program. A bill ([2022-S 2679A](#)) introduced by Sen. Alana M. DiMario (D-Dist. 36, Narragansett, North Kingstown) would create five Early Learning Hubs across Rhode Island.

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

▪ **Senate passes Felag bill to protect drinking water**

The Senate passed legislation ([2022-S 2298A](#)) sponsored by Sen. Walter S. Felag, Jr. (D-Dist. 10, Warren, Bristol, Tiverton) that protects against toxic chemicals in drinking and other water sources. The legislation now heads to the House, where Rep. June S. Speakman (D-Dist. 68, Warren, Bristol) has introduced similar legislation ([2022-H 7233](#)).

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

▪ **House passes Amore bill that extends ‘look back’ period on DUI offenses**

The House has passed legislation ([2022-H 7810](#)) introduced by Rep. Gregg Amore (D-Dist. 65, East Providence) that would extend the “look back” period on repeat alcohol and drug-related vehicular offenses. The bill extends the period from five to 10 years. The measure now moves to the Senate, where Sen. V. Susan Sosnowski (D-Dist. 37, South Kingstown, New Shoreham) has introduced companion legislation ([2022-S 2724](#)).

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

▪ **House, Senate OK bills requiring coverage for pediatric autoimmune disorders**

The House and Senate passed legislation to require insurance coverage for the treatment of pediatric autoimmune neuropsychiatric disorders. The House bill ([2022-H 7503A](#)) was sponsored by Rep. Gregg Amore (D-Dist. 65, East Providence) and the Senate bill ([2022-S 2203A](#)) was sponsored by Sen. Valarie J. Lawson (D-Dist. 14, East Providence). Each bill now moves to the other chamber for consideration.

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

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

▪ **Senate OKs DiMario bill allowing interstate compact for psychological services**

The Senate passed legislation ([2022-S 2605](#)) introduced by Sen. Alana M. DiMario (D-Dist. 36, Narragansett, North Kingstown) that would authorize the governor to enter into the Psychology Interjurisdictional Compact, an interstate agreement that would allow limited telepsychological practice to be conducted across state lines among member states. The measure now moves to the House of Representatives, where similar legislation ([2022-H 7501](#)) has been introduced by Rep. Joseph M. McNamara (D-Dist. 19, Warwick, Cranston).

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

▪ **Senate approves one-year moratorium on for-profit hospital conversions**

The Senate passed legislation ([2022-S 2610A](#)) introduced by Senate President Dominick J. Ruggiero (D-Dist. 4, North Providence, Providence) that would impose a one-year moratorium on hospital ownership transactions involving for-profit

corporations. The measure now moves to the House of Representatives for consideration.

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

▪ **Assembly approves measure to control bird flu**

The General Assembly approved legislation ([2022-H 7785](#), [2022-S 2751](#)) sponsored by Rep. Brandon Potter (D-Dist. 16, Cranston) and Sen. Dawn Euer (D-Dist. 13, Newport, Jamestown) to control potential outbreaks of bird flu and other animal diseases by allowing the Department of Environmental Management to establish quarantine areas around affected animals. The bill now goes to the governor's desk.

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

▪ **Senate passes bill requiring insurers to cover biomarker testing for cancer**

The Senate approved legislation ([2022-S 2201](#)) sponsored by Senate Majority Whip Maryellen Goodwin (D-Dist. 1, Providence) requiring health insurers, including state-issued Medicaid plans, to cover biomarker testing, a test of blood or other biological material to identify changes or abnormalities that may be associated with cancer, helping doctors pinpoint the most effective course of treatment for an individual patient. The bill now goes to the House, where House Deputy Whip Mia A.

Ackerman (D-Dist. 45, Cumberland, Lincoln) is sponsoring companion legislation ([2022-H 7587](#)).

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▪ **Amended cannabis legalization bill passes committees**

Legislation to legalize, regulate and tax adult recreational cannabis use in Rhode Island cleared committee votes in both the House and the Senate. The legislation ([2022-S 2430A](#), [2022-H 7593A](#)), sponsored by Sen. Joshua Miller (D-Dist. 28, Cranston, Providence) and Rep. Scott A. Slater (D-Dist. 10, Providence), decriminalizes the sale and possession of up to 1 ounce of cannabis for those age 21 and up, with no more than 10 ounces stored at home. It would allow a total of 33 licensed retailers statewide, with legal sales starting Dec. 1, and establish a 10% cannabis tax and a 3% local tax on top of the 7% sales tax. Previous convictions for decriminalized acts would be automatically expunged. The legislation is scheduled to come before the full House and Senate Tuesday.

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