

May 27, 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>



- **Adult recreational cannabis bill now law**

The General Assembly approved and the governor signed into law legislation to legalize, regulate and tax adult recreational cannabis use in Rhode Island. The legislation ([2022-S 2430Aaa](#), [2022-H 7593Aaa](#)), 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 allows 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 will be automatically expunged.

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- **General Assembly passes Let RI Vote Act**

The General Assembly passed the Let RI Vote Act ([2022-H 7100A](#), [2022-S 2007A](#)) sponsored by House Majority Whip Katherine S. Kazarian (D-Dist. 63, East Providence) and Sen. Dawn Euer (D-Dist. 13, Newport, Jamestown) to improve access and opportunities to vote in Rhode Island. The legislation expands voter access while ensuring the integrity of Rhode Island elections. It makes permanent several elections provisions put in place in 2020 to protect voters during the pandemic, including wider use of mail ballots. The legislation now heads to the governor's desk for consideration.

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- **House approves legislation addressing housing crisis**

The House of Representatives approved three bills to address the state's housing

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crisis. The first bill ([2022-H 7940A](#)), sponsored by Speaker of the House K. Joseph Shekarchi (D-Dist. 23, Warwick), would elevate the position of the Deputy Secretary of Commerce for Housing to a cabinet-level position within the executive branch of state government. The second ([2022-H 7942A](#)), sponsored by Rep. Mia Ackerman (D-Dist. 45, Cumberland, Lincoln), would amend the definition of an accessory dwelling unit to provide a consistent, statewide framework and efficient process for the approval and permitted use of these units. The third ([2022-H 7945A](#)), sponsored by Rep. June Speakman (D-Dist. 68, Warren, Bristol), would provide more transparency and diverse representation on the State Housing Appeals Board. All three measures now move to the Senate.

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

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

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

- **House OKs bill to level playing field for charter and mayoral academy lotteries**  
The House passed legislation sponsored by Rep. Edith H. Ajello (D-Dist. 1, Providence) aimed at leveling the playing field in lotteries for charter school and mayoral academy admissions. The legislation ([2022-H 7117A](#)) would make entry into charter school lotteries universal among public school students eligible for each school, and allow parents and guardians to decline an invitation to enroll if their child is selected but they do not wish the child to attend. The bill now goes to the Senate, where Sen. Samuel D. Zurier (D-Dist. 3, Providence) is sponsoring a companion bill ([2022-S 2177](#)).  
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **House approves Solomon bill to curb theft of catalytic converters**  
The House of Representatives approved legislation ([2022-H 7751A](#)) introduced by Rep. Joseph J. Solomon Jr. (D-Dist. 22, Warwick), Rep. Edward T. Cardillo Jr. (D-Dist. 42, Johnston, Cranston) and Rep. John J. Lombardi (D-Dist. 8, Providence) designed to help curb the theft of catalytic converters by requiring a purchaser of a catalytic converter to obtain a copy of the registration for the vehicle from which the catalytic converter was removed. The measure now moves to the Senate, where similar legislation ([2022-S 2906](#)) has been introduced by Senate Majority Whip Maryellen Goodwin (D-Dist. 1, Providence).  
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Senate OKs Quezada bill protecting public school students from discrimination**  
The Senate passed legislation ([2022-S 2288](#)) introduced by Sen. Ana B. Quezada (D-Dist. 2, Providence) that would provide students attending public schools enrolled in kindergarten through Grade 12 with a students' bill of rights prohibiting discrimination based on race, sex, gender, economic status or mental, physical, developmental or sensory disabilities. The measure now moves to the House of Representatives, where similar legislation ([2022-H 7163](#)) has been introduced by Rep. Grace Diaz (D-Dist. 11, Providence).  
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **House passes Baginski bill allowing peer-to-peer car sharing programs in RI**  
The House passed legislation ([2022-H 6609](#)) sponsored by Rep. Jacquelyn Baginski (D-Dist. 17, Cranston) that would authorize and regulate peer-to-peer car sharing

programs in the state. “Peer-to-peer car sharing” is defined as the authorized use of a vehicle by an individual other than the vehicle’s owner in a business platform that connects vehicle owners with drivers to enable the sharing of vehicles for financial consideration. The legislation now heads to the Senate, where Sen. Ryan W. Pearson (D-Dist. 19, Cumberland, Lincoln) has sponsored the bill ([2022-S 2222](#)).

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▪ **Senate passes Cano bill requiring coverage for diagnosing and treating infertility**

The Senate passed legislation ([2022-S 2852](#)) sponsored by Sen. Sandra Cano (D-Dist. 8, Pawtucket) that would mandate all insurance contracts, plans or policies provide coverage for the expense of diagnosing and treating infertility. The bill requires coverage for women between the ages of 25 and 42 years, including preimplantation genetic diagnosis (PGD) in conjunction with in vitro fertilization (IVF). The bill now heads to the House, where Rep. Karen Alzate (D-Dist. 60, Pawtucket) has introduced the legislation ([2022-H 8120](#)).

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▪ **House OKs bill preventing those on self-exclusion list from collecting winnings**

The House passed legislation ([2022-H 7424](#)) sponsored by Rep. William W. O’Brien (D-Dist. 54, North Providence) that would prevent problem gamblers on the state’s self-exclusion list from collecting their winnings at Rhode Island’s two casinos. The forfeited winnings — up to \$150,000 per year — would be transferred to the Rhode Island Council on Problem Gambling to use for research, education and prevention of teenage gambling addiction. The bill now heads to the Senate, where Sen. Frank A. Ciccone (D-Dist. 7, Providence, North Providence) has introduced the legislation ([2022-S 2496A](#)).

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▪ **House approves McNamara bill to study Rhode Island’s public education system**

The House of Representatives approved legislation ([2022-H 7784](#)) introduced by Rep. Joseph M. McNamara (D-Dist. 19, Warwick, Cranston) that would create a joint study commission to study, review, and make recommendations on how to most efficiently and effectively administer the governance of the Pre-K through 16 public education system in Rhode Island. The measure now moves to the Senate, where a similar resolution ([2022-S 2442](#)) has been introduced by Sen. Louis P. DiPalma (D-Dist. 12, Middletown, Little Compton, Newport, Tiverton)

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