

April 16, 2021

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>



- **Legislation prohibiting housing discrimination is signed into law**
Legislation introduced by Rep. Anastasia P. Williams (D-Dist. 9, Providence) and Sen. Meghan E. Kallman (D-Dist. 15, Pawtucket, North Providence) that prohibits housing discrimination against those who receive government assistance to pay their rent has been signed into law by the governor. The law ([2021-H 5257aa](#), [2021-S 0561](#)) adds “lawful source of income” to the list of statuses — such as race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression and marital status — that landlords may not use to decide to whom they will rent, or which units they will rent to them. The legislation is part of House Speaker K. Joseph Shekarchi’s (D-Dist. 23, Warwick) seven-bill legislative package on housing in Rhode Island.
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Assembly backs bill requiring full coverage of colorectal cancer screening**
The General Assembly approved ([2021-S 0383A](#), [2021-H 5432A](#)) legislation sponsored by Senate Majority Whip Maryellen Goodwin (D-Dist. 1, Providence) and House Deputy Majority Whip Mia A. Ackerman (D-Dist. 45, Cumberland, Lincoln) to require health insurers to cover in-network preventive colorectal cancer screening, including all colorectal cancer examinations and laboratory tests in accordance with American Cancer Society Guidelines without cost-sharing by patients.
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- **Senate confirms Matos; lieutenant governor sworn in next day**
The Senate unanimously confirmed the appointment of Sabina Matos, previously Providence City Council president, as the state’s 70th lieutenant governor Tuesday, paving the way for her to be sworn in Wednesday. The Rhode Island Black and

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Latino Caucus congratulated her for her hard work in becoming the first person of color to serve in that role.

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- **Senate OKs bill requiring suicide prevention training for public schools**

The Senate passed the Nathan Bruno and Jason Flatt Act ([2021-S 0031](#)) sponsored by Sen. James A. Seveney (D-Dist. 11, Portsmouth, Bristol, Tiverton) that would require all public school districts to adopt suicide prevention policies and train all personnel in suicide awareness and prevention annually. The measure now moves to the House of Representatives, where similar legislation ([2021-H 5353](#)) has been introduced by Rep. Terri Cortvriend (D-Dist. 72, Portsmouth, Middletown).
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Senate, House OK bills to make construction tax exemptions permanent**

The Senate and House passed separate bills to make tax exemptions for properties under construction permanent. The Senate bill ([2021-S 0288](#)) was sponsored by Senate Majority Leader Michael J. McCaffrey (D-Dist. 29, Warwick). The House bill ([2021-H 5260](#)) was sponsored by House Floor Manager John G. Edwards (D-Dist. 70, Tiverton, Portsmouth). Each bill now moves to the other chamber for consideration.
[Click here to see McCaffrey release.](#)
[Click here to see Edwards release.](#)
- **Senate passes bill making Rhode Island Promise program permanent**

The Senate passed legislation ([2021-S 0079](#)) introduced by President Dominick Ruggerio (D-Dist. 4, North Providence, Providence) to permanently enact the Rhode Island Promise program, which provides up to two years of free tuition for eligible Rhode Islanders at the Community College of Rhode Island. The program is currently set to expire with the class entering CCRI in September. The measure now moves to the House, where companion legislation ([2021-H 5224](#)) has been introduced by Speaker of the House K. Joseph Shekarchi (D-Dist. 23, Warwick).
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Senate passes bill calling for consumer education for high school students**

The Senate has passed legislation ([2021-S 0349](#)) introduced by Sen. Sandra Cano (D-Dist. 8, Pawtucket) that directs the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education, in consultation with the Rhode Island Department of Education, to develop and approve statewide academic standards for the instruction of consumer education in public high schools passed the Senate. Rep. Mia A. Ackerman (D-Dist. 45, Cumberland, Lincoln) has sponsored the bill ([2021-H 5491](#)) in the House.
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Senate approves bill to limit public K-2 classes to 20 students**

The Senate approved legislation ([2021-S 0287](#)) sponsored by Senate President Pro Tempore Hanna M. Gallo (D-Dist. 27, Cranston, West Warwick) kindergarten through Grade 2 classes in public schools to 20 students. Studies have shown the benefits of small early elementary classes extend to graduation and beyond.
[Click here to see news release.](#)

- **Doula coverage bill heard during Black Maternal Health Week**
Rep. Marcia Ranglin-Vassell (D-Dist. 5, Providence) and Rep. Liana Cassar (D-Dist. 66, Barrington, East Providence) urged support for their legislation to provide more women access to doulas as a means to help address health disparities faced by communities of color. The bill ([2021-H 5929](#)) was heard by the House Finance Committee this week during the annual Black Maternal Health Week. Identical legislation ([2021-S 0484](#)) is sponsored in the Senate by Sen. Ana B. Quezada (D-Dist. 2, Providence).
[Click here to see news release.](#)

- **Rep. Ruggiero files bill to study CRMC reorganization**
Following two high-profile development decisions that landed in court and have been criticized by the attorney general, Rep. Deborah Ruggiero (D-Dist. 74, Jamestown, Middletown) submitted legislation to explore the possibility of reorganizing the Coastal Resources Management Council (CRMC).
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