

2023 -- S 1131

LC003236

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2023

SENATE RESOLUTION

CREATING A SPECIAL LEGISLATIVE COMMISSION TO REVIEW AND PROVIDE
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PROFESSIONAL AND LABOR-MANAGEMENT
STANDARDS THAT PROVIDE SCHOOL-BASED FLEXIBILITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY
FOR EMPLOYEES OF THE PROVIDENCE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Introduced By: Senator Samuel D. Zurier

Date Introduced: June 15, 2023

Referred To: Placed on the Senate Consent Calendar

1 WHEREAS, The Providence Public Schools (PPS) comprise the largest school district in
2 the State, with more than 21,000 students and more than 2,000 educators; and

3 WHEREAS, The PPS student body is one of most diverse in the State, with a student
4 population that is 65 percent Hispanic, 16 percent White, 5 percent Asian, 4 percent Multi-Racial,
5 and 1 percent Native American; and

6 WHEREAS, Nearly one-third of Providence students are English Language Learners, and
7 the majority of Providence students' families speak one of 54 primary languages that is not
8 English; and

9 WHEREAS, Eighty-five percent of the PPS student body qualifies for free or reduced
10 lunch, the second highest incidence of poverty in Rhode Island public schools as measured by this
11 criterion; and

12 WHEREAS, The socioeconomic diversity of the student body in Providence presents
13 unique challenges and opportunities for the district's professional staff; and

14 WHEREAS, Too few PPS students have been able to obtain academic proficiency for too
15 many years, as measured by the State's and Nation's Report Card assessments; and

16 WHEREAS, Enrollment in PPS has declined as students have transferred out of the
17 district into charter schools, creating displacements and disruptions within the schools and their
18 staff; and

1 WHEREAS, The basic framework under State law governing the delivery of public
2 education, as applied to the Providence Public Schools, has not been significantly modified in
3 many years; and

4 WHEREAS, The quality of the education Providence Public Schools students receive in
5 their schools depends critically upon its professional educators; now, therefore be it

6 RESOLVED, That a special legislative commission be and the same is hereby created
7 consisting of fifteen (15) members: three (3) of whom shall be members of the Senate, not more
8 than two (2) from the same political party, to be appointed by the President of the Senate; one of
9 whom shall be the Turnaround Superintendent, or designee; one of whom shall be the
10 Commissioner of the Rhode Island Department of Education, or designee; one of whom shall be
11 the Mayor of the City of Providence, or designee; one of whom shall be a member of the
12 Providence City Council, to be appointed by the President of the Providence City Council; one of
13 whom shall be a member of the Providence School Board, to be appointed by the President of the
14 Providence School Board; one of whom shall be the building administrator, to be appointed by
15 the Superintendent of Providence Public Schools; one of whom shall be a teacher, to be appointed
16 by the President of the Providence Teachers Union; one of whom shall be the President of the
17 Rhode Island Federation of Teachers and Health Professionals, or designee; one of whom shall be
18 a parent of children in the Providence public schools, to be appointed by the Senate President;
19 one of whom shall be a student currently enrolled or recently graduated from the Providence
20 public schools, to be appointed by the President of the Senate; and two (2) of whom shall be ex-
21 officio public members with experience in education to serve in an advisory capacity to the
22 commission, to be appointed by the Senate President.

23 In lieu of any appointment of a member of the legislature to a legislative study
24 commission, the appointing authority may appoint a member of the general public to serve in
25 place of a legislator; provided that, the Senate President or the Minority Leader of the political
26 party that is entitled to the appointment consents to the appointment of the member of the general
27 public.

28 The purpose of said commission shall be to:

- 29 • Review the professional standards and the labor-management relationship for
30 employees of the Providence Public Schools, particularly as defined by State law; and
31 • Develop recommendations that promote a rewarding professional environment and
32 great school-based flexibility and accountability for the district's professional educators.

33 All departments and agencies of the state shall furnish such advice and information,
34 documentary and otherwise, to said commission and its agents as is deemed necessary or

1 desirable by the commission to facilitate the purposes of this resolution.

2 Forthwith upon passage of this resolution, the members of the commission shall be
3 appointed and meet at the call of the President of the Senate by July 31, 2023, and shall organize
4 and select from among the legislators, a Chairperson.

5 A quorum for the commission's formation and activity will be a minimum of eight (8)
6 voting members.

7 The Joint Committee on Legislative Services is hereby authorized and directed to provide
8 suitable quarters for said commission; and be it further

9 RESOLVED, That the commission shall develop and submit its recommendations to the
10 Senate, no later than January 24, 2024, and said commission shall expire on June 30, 2024.

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EXPLANATION
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
OF
SENATE RESOLUTION
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1 This resolution would create a fifteen (15) member special legislative commission whose
2 purpose it would be to review and provide recommendations for professional and labor-
3 management standards for employees of the Providence Public Schools, and who would report
4 back to the Senate no later than January 24, 2024, and whose life would expire on June 30, 2024.

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