

2025 -- H 5599

LC002110

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2025

A N A C T

RELATING TO EDUCATION -- COUNCIL ON POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

Introduced By: Representatives Speakman, Knight, Cruz, Giraldo, Voas, Alzate, and Morales

Date Introduced: February 26, 2025

Referred To: House Education

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Chapter 16-59 of the General Laws entitled "Council on Postsecondary  
2 Education [See Title 16 Chapter 97 — The Rhode Island Board of Education Act]" is hereby  
3 amended by adding thereto the following section:

4 **16-59-29. Corrections education and vocational planning group.**

5 (a) There is established a corrections education and vocational planning group (CEVPG)  
6 to consider opportunities for career and educational programming in the Rhode Island state prison  
7 system, including higher education pathways that have demonstrable benefits including facility  
8 safety, public safety, lower recidivism, self-efficacy, intergenerational improvement, and  
9 employability.

10 (b) The members of the CEVPG shall be as follows:

11 (1) The commissioner of the department of corrections, or designee, who shall serve as  
12 chair;

13 (2) The postsecondary commissioner, or designee;

14 (3) The director of rehabilitative services, department of corrections;

15 (4) The director of the department of business regulation, or designee;

16 (5) The president of the New England Board of Higher Education, or designee;

17 (6) A formerly incarcerated person, appointed by the director of rehabilitative services,  
18 department of corrections; and

19 (7) The chairperson of the council on postsecondary education, or designee.

1           (c) The CEVPG shall consult as necessary with the New England Board of Higher  
2 Education, other New England departments of corrections, service providers, and advocates.

3           (d) The CEVPG shall consider policies, implementation strategies, and funding needs,  
4 including, but not limited to:

5           (1) Strategic planning for educational challenges and opportunities;

6           (2) Sustainable partnerships with Rhode Island institutions of higher education for the  
7 delivery of courses and programs;

8           (3) Credit transfer compacts to ensure higher education institution acceptance of credits  
9 earned before and during incarceration, including strategies for completion of degree programs  
10 after release from incarceration;

11           (4) College readiness programs; and

12           (5) Coordination with cross-facility and cross-state programs and the New England Board  
13 of Higher Education to expand availability of offerings.

14           (e) The CEVPG shall:

15           (1) Assess labor market needs and in-demand skills and credentials for alignment of  
16 postsecondary education in prison;

17           (2) Inventory the department of corrections facility needs, including space, staffing, and  
18 access to technology and computer equipment, within safety protocols;

19           (3) Assess opportunities for work-based learning and apprenticeships;

20           (4) Identify barriers to continuity of academic programs, support, campus access upon  
21 release, and consider the establishment of reentry navigators at participating higher education  
22 institutions;

23           (5) Examine ways to prioritize postsecondary and career pathways in the intake and  
24 classification processes, and the use of education and career navigators;

25           (6) Examine the supplementation of Pell Grant funding by Rhode Island institutions of  
26 higher education for Pell Grant-eligible, formerly incarcerated persons; and

27           (7) Consider state budgetary needs, sources of federal funding in addition to Second  
28 Chance Pell Grants, and grant funding regarding implementation and planning for new and existing  
29 educational opportunities, especially in coordination with the New England Board of Higher  
30 Education and other departments of correction in New England.

31           (f) The CEVPG shall file annual reports on group progress and recommendations  
32 beginning on December 1, 2025, with all organizations listed in subsection (b) of this section, as  
33 well as with the governor, the president of the senate, and the speaker of the house of  
34 representatives.

1 SECTION 2. This act shall take effect on July 1, 2025.

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EXPLANATION  
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL  
OF  
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RELATING TO EDUCATION -- COUNCIL ON POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

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1           This act would establish a corrections education and vocational planning group (CEVPG)  
2 to consider opportunities for career and educational programming in the Rhode Island state prison  
3 system, including higher education pathways that have demonstrable benefits to incarcerated  
4 persons.

5           This act would take effect on July 1, 2025.

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