

2026 -- S 2873

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LC005458
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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2026

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A N A C T

RELATING TO EDUCATION -- HEALTH AND SAFETY OF PUPILS

Introduced By: Senators DiPalma, Thompson, Murray, Valverde, Ujifusa, and Lauria

Date Introduced: March 04, 2026

Referred To: Senate Health & Human Services

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Chapter 16-21 of the General Laws entitled "Health and Safety of Pupils" is
2 hereby amended by adding thereto the following section:

3 **16-21-44. School air quality.**

4 (a) The following words and phrases when used in this section shall have the following
5 meanings:

6 (1) "Certified testing, adjusting, and balancing technician" means:

7 (i) A technician, tradesperson, or apprentice certified to perform testing, adjusting, and
8 balancing of heating, ventilation, and air conditioning systems by the Associated Air Balance
9 Council, the National Environmental Balancing Bureau, or the testing, adjusting and balancing
10 bureau; or

11 (ii) A person certified to perform ventilation assessments of heating, ventilation, and air
12 conditioning systems through a certification body accredited in accordance with the ISO/IEC 17024
13 personnel certification standard.

14 (2) "HVAC " means heating, ventilation and air conditioning.

15 (3) "MERV " means minimum efficiency reporting value.

16 (4) "PM2.5 " means particles less than two and one-half (2.5) micrometers in diameter.

17 (5) "PM10 " means particles less than ten (10) micrometers in diameter.

18 (6) "Professional engineering standards" means nationally recognized, science-based
19 technical standards for the design, operation, maintenance, and performance of indoor spaces,

1 developed through an accredited consensus process, as in effect at the time the inspection,
2 evaluation, or work is performed. Relevant standards include, but are not limited to,
3 ANSI/ASHRAE Standard 62.1 (ventilation for acceptable indoor air quality), ANSI/ASHRAE
4 Standard 55 (thermal environmental conditions for human occupancy), and ASHRAE Standard 241
5 (control of infectious aerosols).

6 (7) "Qualified personnel" means either;

7 (i) A certified testing, adjusting, and balancing technician; or

8 (ii) A skilled and trained workforce under the supervision of a certified testing, adjusting,
9 and balancing technician.

10 (8) "Skilled and trained workforce" means a workforce, managed in conformance with the
11 Davis-Bacon Act, 40 U.S.C. §§ 3141 through 3148, in which at least sixty percent (60%) of the
12 workers are graduates of or registered in and attending an apprenticeship program registered with
13 the department of labor and training, division of apprenticeship training.

14 (9) "Verification" means the process of evaluating a system, component, or product to
15 determine whether it complies with specified requirements, design specifications, or regulations.

16 (b) The department of health shall establish guidelines for indoor air quality in schools,
17 including recommended thresholds and/or rates for environmental conditions that directly affect
18 health and learning. Required areas of focus include:

19 (1) Temperature;

20 (2) Humidity;

21 (3) Carbon dioxide;

22 (4) PM2.5;

23 (5) PM10;

24 (6) Ventilation; and

25 (7) Filtration.

26 (c) The department of education school building authority, as part of the needs survey
27 outlined in § 16-105-3, shall expand services to include uniform inspection and evaluation of the
28 indoor air quality within each school building, including heating, ventilation and air conditioning
29 systems when present. The inspection shall be conducted in conjunction with local school boards,
30 and shall identify any deficiencies from the department of health recommendations established
31 pursuant to the provisions of subsection (b) of this section, as well as other conditions that may
32 affect building performance or occupant health. Implementation of the expanded assessment scope
33 under this subsection, including HVAC and indoor air quality-related evaluations, shall be subject
34 to the availability of state funding appropriated for statewide school facility assessments. Inspection

1 results shall include estimated costs to address identified issues through capital construction,
2 renovation, maintenance, or other school facility investments, as outlined in §16-105-3. The
3 inspection and evaluation shall be performed by qualified personnel at least once every five (5)
4 years. The department of education shall define the assessment procedures and data collection
5 methods, which shall include, but not be limited to, the following:

6 (1) Environmental measurements including air temperature, humidity, carbon dioxide,
7 PM2.5, and PM10 under occupied conditions;

8 (2) Evaluation of filtration levels and maintenance practices;

9 (3) Verification of the physical condition and operational performance of ventilation
10 system components, in accordance with professional engineering standards; and

11 (4) Verification that required maintenance of ventilation systems has been performed in
12 accordance with professional engineering standards.

13 (d) The department of education shall make the inspection and evaluation results easily
14 available online and send the test results directly to:

15 (1) Each school's principal;

16 (2) The department of elementary and secondary education; and

17 (3) The appropriate local school board.

18 (e) All schools with HVAC systems shall install filtration that achieves MERV levels of
19 thirteen (13) to the extent determined to be feasible and appropriate for the existing HVAC system,
20 as determined by the school board, in accordance with the latest professional engineering standards
21 and recommendations. If it is determined by the school board that the existing HVAC system is not
22 designed to achieve MERV levels of thirteen (13), the school shall install filtration that achieves
23 the highest level feasible without significantly reducing the lifespan or performance of the existing
24 HVAC system. School personnel shall inspect and replace filters as recommended by manufacturer
25 guidelines. All HVAC adjustments shall be performed by qualified personnel.

26 (f) The department of education, in coordination with the department of health, shall submit
27 a report to the general assembly within one year of the effective date of this section with
28 recommendations to improve indoor air quality in public schools. The report shall provide an
29 update on indoor air quality procedures, guidelines, and best practices, along with the status of
30 funding necessary to support expanded indoor air quality and HVAC improvements and
31 assessments in schools. The report shall also utilize data collected as part of the needs survey
32 outlined in §16-105-3. Thereafter, the needs survey and corresponding report shall be conducted
33 on a five (5) year cycle, consistent with § 16-105-3, subject to the availability of funding.

34 (g) The department of education shall designate and publicly identify a point of contact to

1 [receive and respond to concerns related to indoor air quality and ventilation systems in public](#)
2 [schools.](#)

3 [\(h\) The department of health and department of education are hereby authorized to](#)
4 [promulgate rules and regulations necessary to carry out the purposes of this section.](#)

5 SECTION 2. This act shall take effect upon passage.

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EXPLANATION
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
OF
A N A C T
RELATING TO EDUCATION -- HEALTH AND SAFETY OF PUPILS

1 This act would require inspections and evaluations of the indoor air quality of each school
2 building, including heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems. The department of health
3 would establish guidelines for indoor air quality in schools, including recommended thresholds and
4 rates for environmental conditions that directly affect health and learning. The department of
5 education in coordination with the department of health, shall submit a report to the general
6 assembly within one year of the effective date of this section, with recommendations to improve
7 indoor air quality in public schools.

8 This act would take effect upon passage.

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