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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 -- SCHOOL COMMITTEES AND SUPERINTENDENTS

Introduced By: Senators Acosta, Lawson, Gallo, DiPalma, Ciccone, McKenney, Mack,
and Valverde

Date Introduced: April 14, 2026

Referred To: Senate Finance

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Section 16-2-34 of the General Laws in Chapter 16-2 entitled "School
2 Committees and Superintendents [See Title 16 Chapter 97 — The Rhode Island Board of Education
3 Act]" is hereby repealed.

4 ~~**16-2-34. Central Falls School District board of trustees.**~~

5 ~~(a) There is hereby established a seven (7) member board of trustees, which shall govern~~
6 ~~the Central Falls School District. With the exception of those powers and duties reserved by the~~
7 ~~commissioner of elementary and secondary education, and the board of regents for elementary and~~
8 ~~secondary education, the board of trustees shall have the powers and duties of school committees.~~
9 ~~Notwithstanding any provision of law to the contrary, the commissioner of elementary and~~
10 ~~secondary education, as the executive agent of the board of regents for elementary and secondary~~
11 ~~education, is authorized to exercise in whole or in part care, control, and management over the~~
12 ~~public schools of the Central Falls school district within the scope of authority of the board of~~
13 ~~trustees and board of regents, whenever the commissioner deems such intervention to be necessary~~
14 ~~and appropriate.~~

15 ~~(b) The board of regents for elementary and secondary education shall appoint the members~~
16 ~~of the board of trustees from nominations made by the commissioner of elementary and secondary~~
17 ~~education. The chairperson shall also be selected in this manner. The board of regents shall~~
18 ~~determine the number, qualifications, and terms of office of members of the board of trustees,~~
19 ~~provided however, that at least four (4) of the members shall be residents of the city and parents of~~

1 ~~current or former Central Falls public school students. The remaining three (3) shall be appointed~~
2 ~~at large.~~

3 ~~(e) The board of regents shall provide parameters for overall budget requests, approve the~~
4 ~~budget, and otherwise participate in budget development.~~

5 ~~(d) The commissioner of elementary and secondary education shall recommend parameters~~
6 ~~for overall budget requests, recommend a budget, and otherwise participate in budget development.~~

7 ~~(e) The commissioner shall approve the process for selection of the superintendent.~~

8 ~~(f) The board of trustees shall meet monthly and serve without compensation. The board~~
9 ~~of trustees shall have broad policy making authority for the operation of the school, as well as the~~
10 ~~following powers and duties:~~

11 ~~(1) To identify the educational needs of the district;~~

12 ~~(2) To develop educational policies to meet the needs of students in the school district;~~

13 ~~(3) To appoint a superintendent to serve as its chief executive officer and to approve~~
14 ~~assistant and associate superintendents from nominations made by the superintendent;~~

15 ~~(4) To provide policy guidance and otherwise participate in budget development; and~~

16 ~~(5) To develop staffing policies which ensure that all students are taught by educators of~~
17 ~~the highest possible quality.~~

18 ~~(g) The superintendent shall serve at the pleasure of the board of trustees with the initial~~
19 ~~appointment to be for a period of not more than three (3) years; provided, however, that the terms~~
20 ~~and conditions of employment are subject to the approval of the board of regents for elementary~~
21 ~~and secondary education.~~

22 ~~(h) It shall be the responsibility of the superintendent to manage and operate the school on~~
23 ~~a day to day basis. The superintendent's duties shall include the following:~~

24 ~~(1) To be responsible for the care, supervision, and management of the schools;~~

25 ~~(2) To recommend to the board of trustees educational policies to meet the needs of the~~
26 ~~district, and to implement policies established by the board of trustees;~~

27 ~~(3) To present nominations to the board of trustees for assistant and associate~~
28 ~~superintendents and to appoint all other school personnel;~~

29 ~~(4) To provide for the evaluation of all school district personnel;~~

30 ~~(5) To establish a school based management approach for decision making for the operation~~
31 ~~of the school;~~

32 ~~(6) To prepare a budget and otherwise participate in budget development as required, and~~
33 ~~to authorize purchases consistent with the adopted school district budget;~~

34 ~~(7) To report to the board of trustees, on a regular basis, the financial condition and~~

1 operation of the schools, and to report annually on the educational progress of the schools;

2 ~~(8) To establish appropriate advisory committees as needed to provide guidance on new~~
3 ~~directions and feedback on the operation of the schools;~~

4 ~~(9) With policy guidance from the board of trustees and extensive involvement of the~~
5 ~~administrators and faculty in the school, to annually prepare a budget. The board of trustees shall~~
6 ~~approve the budget and transmit it to the commissioner. The board of regents for elementary and~~
7 ~~secondary education, upon recommendation of the commissioner of elementary and secondary~~
8 ~~education, shall provide parameters for the overall budget request. Based on review and~~
9 ~~recommendation by the commissioner, the board of regents shall approve the total budget and~~
10 ~~incorporate it into its budget request to the governor and to the general assembly. Line item~~
11 ~~budgeting decisions shall be the responsibility of the superintendent; and~~

12 ~~(10) To negotiate, along with the chairperson of the board of trustees and his or her~~
13 ~~appointed designee, all district employment contracts, which contracts shall be subject to the~~
14 ~~approval of the commissioner of elementary and secondary education with the concurrence of the~~
15 ~~board of regents.~~

16 ~~(i) Nothing in this section shall be deemed to limit or otherwise interfere with the rights of~~
17 ~~teachers and other school employees to bargain collectively pursuant to chapters 9.3 and 9.4 of title~~
18 ~~28, to exercise rights afforded under any statute including, but not limited to, Title 16, or to allow~~
19 ~~the commissioner, board of trustees or the superintendent to abrogate any agreement by collective~~
20 ~~bargaining.~~

21 ~~(j) The appointment of the special state administrator for the Central Falls School District~~
22 ~~and the Central Falls School District Advisory Group, created by chapter 312 of the Rhode Island~~
23 ~~Public Laws of 1991, will no longer be in effect upon the selection and appointment of the board~~
24 ~~of trustees created in this section. All powers and duties of the special state administrator and the~~
25 ~~Central Falls School District Advisory Group are hereby transferred and assigned to the board of~~
26 ~~trustees created in this section, upon the selection and appointment of that board.~~

27 SECTION 2. Section 16-7.2-6 of the General Laws in Chapter 16-7.2 entitled "The
28 Education Equity and Property Tax Relief Act" is hereby amended to read as follows:

29 **16-7.2-6. Categorical programs, state funded expenses.**

30 In addition to the foundation education aid provided pursuant to § 16-7.2-3, the permanent
31 foundation education-aid program shall provide direct state funding for:

32 (a) Excess costs associated with special education students. Excess costs are defined when
33 an individual special education student's cost shall be deemed to be "extraordinary." Extraordinary
34 costs are those educational costs that exceed the state-approved threshold based on an amount

1 above four times the core foundation amount (total of core instruction amount plus student success
2 amount). The department of elementary and secondary education shall prorate the funds available
3 for distribution among those eligible school districts if the total approved costs for which school
4 districts are seeking reimbursement exceed the amount of funding appropriated in any fiscal year;
5 and the department of elementary and secondary education shall also collect data on those
6 educational costs that exceed the state-approved threshold based on an amount above two (2), three
7 (3), and five (5) times the core foundation amount;

8 (b) Career and technical education costs to help meet initial investment requirements
9 needed to transform existing, or create new, comprehensive, career and technical education
10 programs and career pathways in critical and emerging industries and to help offset the higher-
11 than-average costs associated with facilities, equipment maintenance and repair, and supplies
12 necessary for maintaining the quality of highly specialized programs that are a priority for the state.
13 The department shall develop criteria for the purpose of allocating any and all career and technical
14 education funds as may be determined by the general assembly on an annual basis. The department
15 of elementary and secondary education shall prorate the funds available for distribution among
16 those eligible school districts if the total approved costs for which school districts are seeking
17 reimbursement exceed the amount of funding available in any fiscal year;

18 (c) Programs to increase access to voluntary, free, high-quality pre-kindergarten programs.
19 The department shall recommend criteria for the purpose of allocating any and all early childhood
20 program funds as may be determined by the general assembly;

21 (d)(1) ~~Central Falls, Davies, and the Met Center~~ Stabilization Fund is established to ensure
22 that appropriate funding is available to support their students. Additional support for Central Falls
23 is needed due to ~~concerns regarding~~ the city's limited capacity to meet the local share of education
24 costs. This fund requires that education aid calculated pursuant to § 16-7.2-3 and funding for costs
25 outside the permanent foundation education-aid formula, including, but not limited to,
26 transportation, facility maintenance, ~~and~~ retiree health benefits, tuition payments for outplaced
27 special education students, and tuition payments to other public schools, shall be shared between
28 the state and the city of Central Falls. ~~The fund shall be annually reviewed to determine the amount~~
29 ~~of the state and city appropriation. The state's share of this fund may be supported through a~~
30 ~~reallocation of current state appropriations to the Central Falls school district. At the end of the~~
31 ~~transition period defined in § 16-7.2-7, the municipality will continue its contribution pursuant to~~
32 ~~§ 16-7-24.~~

33 (2) The total amount allocated to the Central Falls Stabilization Fund shall be equal to the
34 sum of:

1 (i) The difference between Central Falls school district's foundation education aid,
2 calculated pursuant to § 16-7.2-3(a), and the state's share of Central Falls school district's
3 foundation education aid, calculated pursuant to § 16-7.2-4; and

4 (ii) Funding for all costs outside the permanent foundation education-aid formula,
5 calculated according to the most recently published Universal Charter of Accounts (UCOA)
6 expenditures data for Central Falls school district, with adjustments for inflation and the percentage
7 change in the resident average daily membership for the city of Central Falls. Beginning in FY2027
8 and in every year thereafter, the city of Central Falls shall allocate to the Central Falls Stabilization
9 Fund an amount at least equal to the sum of:

10 (A) One percent (1%) of the city's prior year total tax levy; and

11 (B) The city's prior year contribution to the Central Falls Stabilization Fund.

12 (3) Beginning in FY2027, there shall be a contribution from the school district's fund
13 balance in an amount in accordance with the final report of the Special Joint Legislative
14 Commission to Study the Return of Central Falls Schools to Local Governance with a target end
15 point that meets GFOA standards and aligns with RIDE's fiscal accountability standards and annual
16 reporting to ensure adequate funding of the foundation education aid for all Central Falls students.
17 The state shall allocate the balance of the Central Falls Stabilization Fund. The city shall annually
18 assume responsibility for any deficit incurred by the Central Falls school district. No later than
19 September 2030, as preparation for the FY2032 budgeting process, this funding arrangement shall
20 be reviewed and, if deemed necessary by mutual agreement of the state and city, amended.

21 (4) Davies and the Met Center Stabilization Fund is established to ensure that appropriate
22 funding is available to support their students. Additional support for the Davies and the Met Center
23 is needed due to the costs associated with running a stand-alone high school offering both academic
24 and career and technical coursework. The department shall recommend criteria for the purpose of
25 allocating any and all stabilization funds for Davies and the Met Center as may be determined by
26 the general assembly;

27 (e) Excess costs associated with transporting students to out-of-district non-public schools.
28 This fund will provide state funding for the costs associated with transporting students to out-of-
29 district non-public schools, pursuant to chapter 21.1 of this title. The state will assume the costs of
30 non-public out-of-district transportation for those districts participating in the statewide system.
31 The department of elementary and secondary education shall prorate the funds available for
32 distribution among those eligible school districts if the total approved costs for which school
33 districts are seeking reimbursement exceed the amount of funding available in any fiscal year;

34 (f) Excess costs associated with transporting students within regional school districts. This

1 fund will provide direct state funding for the excess costs associated with transporting students
2 within regional school districts, established pursuant to chapter 3 of this title. This fund requires
3 that the state and regional school district share equally the student transportation costs net any
4 federal sources of revenue for these expenditures. The department of elementary and secondary
5 education shall prorate the funds available for distribution among those eligible school districts if
6 the total approved costs for which school districts are seeking reimbursement exceed the amount
7 of funding available in any fiscal year;

8 (g) Public school districts that are regionalized shall be eligible for a regionalization bonus
9 as set forth below:

10 (1) As used herein, the term “regionalized” shall be deemed to refer to a regional school
11 district established under the provisions of chapter 3 of this title, including the Chariho Regional
12 School district;

13 (2) For those districts that are regionalized as of July 1, 2010, the regionalization bonus
14 shall commence in FY 2012. For those districts that regionalize after July 1, 2010, the
15 regionalization bonus shall commence in the first fiscal year following the establishment of a
16 regionalized school district as set forth in chapter 3 of this title, including the Chariho Regional
17 School District;

18 (3) The regionalization bonus in the first fiscal year shall be two percent (2.0%) of the
19 state's share of the foundation education aid for the regionalized district as calculated pursuant to
20 §§ 16-7.2-3 and 16-7.2-4 in that fiscal year;

21 (4) The regionalization bonus in the second fiscal year shall be one percent (1.0%) of the
22 state's share of the foundation education aid for the regionalized district as calculated pursuant to
23 §§ 16-7.2-3 and 16-7.2-4 in that fiscal year;

24 (5) The regionalization bonus shall cease in the third fiscal year;

25 (6) The regionalization bonus for the Chariho regional school district shall be applied to
26 the state share of the permanent foundation education aid for the member towns; and

27 (7) The department of elementary and secondary education shall prorate the funds available
28 for distribution among those eligible regionalized school districts if the total, approved costs for
29 which regionalized school districts are seeking a regionalization bonus exceed the amount of
30 funding appropriated in any fiscal year;

31 (h) [Deleted by P.L. 2024, ch. 117, art. 8, § 1.]

32 (i) State support for school resource officers. For purposes of this subsection, a school
33 resource officer (SRO) shall be defined as a career law enforcement officer with sworn authority
34 who is deployed by an employing police department or agency in a community-oriented policing

1 assignment to work in collaboration with one or more schools. School resource officers should have
2 completed at least forty (40) hours of specialized training in school policing, administered by an
3 accredited agency, before being assigned. Beginning in FY 2019, for a period of three (3) years,
4 school districts or municipalities that choose to employ school resource officers shall receive direct
5 state support for costs associated with employing such officers at public middle and high schools.
6 Districts or municipalities shall be reimbursed an amount equal to one-half (½) of the cost of
7 salaries and benefits for the qualifying positions. Funding will be provided for school resource
8 officer positions established on or after July 1, 2018, provided that:

- 9 (1) Each school resource officer shall be assigned to one school:
- 10 (i) Schools with enrollments below one thousand two hundred (1,200) students shall
11 require one school resource officer;
- 12 (ii) Schools with enrollments of one thousand two hundred (1,200) or more students shall
13 require two school resource officers;
- 14 (2) School resource officers hired in excess of the requirement noted above shall not be
15 eligible for reimbursement; and
- 16 (3) Schools that eliminate existing school resource officer positions and create new
17 positions under this provision shall not be eligible for reimbursement; and
- 18 (j) Categorical programs defined in subsections (a) through (g) shall be funded pursuant to
19 the transition plan in § 16-7.2-7.

20 SECTION 3. This act shall take effect on July 1, 2026.

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EXPLANATION
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
OF

A N A C T

RELATING TO EDUCATION -- SCHOOL COMMITTEES AND SUPERINTENDENTS

1 This act would repeal § 16-2-34 ("Central Falls School District board of trustees"). The
2 Central Falls Stabilization Fund would include funding for tuition payments for outplaced special
3 education students and tuition payments to other public schools. The Davies and Met Stabilization
4 Fund would be established to ensure appropriate funding is available to support their students.

5 This act would take effect on July 1, 2026.

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