

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2023

A N A C T

RELATING TO EDUCATION -- THE RHODE ISLAND CLIMATE CHANGE AND OCEAN PROTECTION EDUCATION PROGRAM ACT

Introduced By: Senators Lawson, Lauria, DiMario, Cano, Britto, Murray, Valverde, Euer, and Mack

Date Introduced: March 07, 2023

Referred To: Senate Finance

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Title 16 of the General Laws entitled "EDUCATION" is hereby amended by
2 adding thereto the following chapter:

3 CHAPTER 112

4 THE RHODE ISLAND CLIMATE CHANGE OCEAN PROTECTION EDUCATION

5 PROGRAM ACT

6 **16-112-1. Short title.**

7 This chapter shall be known and may be cited as the "The Rhode Island Climate Change
8 and Ocean Protection Education Program Act".

9 **16-112-2. Definitions.**

10 As used in this chapter:

11 (1) "Apprenticeship" means a proven model of job preparation that combines paid on-the-
12 job learning with related instruction to progressively increase workers' skill levels and wages. It is
13 an employer-driven model that provides an effective way for employers to recruit, train, and retain
14 highly skilled workers. As an "earn and learn" strategy, apprenticeship offers job seekers immediate
15 employment that offers advancement along a career path and a nationally recognized credential.

16 (2) "Blue economy" means an economy built on the sustainable use of ocean resources for
17 economic growth, improved livelihoods, and jobs while preserving the health of the ocean
18 ecosystem.

1 (3) "Climate change education" means nonformal and formal interdisciplinary learning at
2 all age levels about:

3 (i) Climate change, climate adaptation and mitigation, climate resilience, and climate
4 justice; and

5 (ii) The effects of climate change, climate adaptation and mitigation, climate resilience,
6 and climate justice on the environmental, energy, social, and economic systems of the United
7 States.

8 (4) "Climate literacy" means competence or knowledge of climate change, its causes and
9 impacts, and the technical, scientific, economic, and social dynamics of promising solutions.

10 (5) "Climate justice" means the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people,
11 regardless of race, color, culture, national origin, or income, with respect to the development,
12 implementation, and enforcement of policies and projects to ensure that each person enjoys the
13 same degree of protection from the adverse effects of climate change.

14 (6) "Environmental justice" means the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all
15 people, regardless of race, color, culture, national origin, or income, with respect to the
16 development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies to
17 ensure that each person enjoys:

18 (i) The same degree of protection from environmental and health hazards; and

19 (ii) Equal access to any state agency action on environmental justice issues in order to have
20 a healthy environment in which to live, learn, work, and recreate.

21 (7) "Environmental justice community" means a community with significant representation
22 of communities of color, low-income communities, or Tribal and indigenous communities that
23 experiences, or is at risk of experiencing, higher or more adverse human health or environmental
24 effects as compared to other communities.

25 (8) "Green economy" means an economy that results in improved human and economic
26 well-being and social equity by significantly reducing environmental risks and ecological
27 scarcities.

28 (9) "Institution of higher education" has the meaning given the term in section 101 of the
29 Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1001).

30 (10) "Local educational agency" and "state educational agency" have the meanings given
31 those terms in section 8101 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C.
32 7801).

33 (11) "Nonformal" means, with respect to learning, out-of-school educational programming
34 carried out by nonprofit organizations and public agencies.

1 (12) "Nonprofit organization" means an organization described in section 501(c)(3) of the
2 Internal Revenue Code of 1986 and exempt from taxation under 501(a) of that Code.

3 (13) "Ocean literacy" means competence or knowledge of the ocean, its interaction with
4 humans, and the technical, scientific, economic, and social dynamics of ocean protection.

5 (14) "Ocean protection education" means nonformal and formal interdisciplinary learning
6 at all age levels about:

7 (i) Ocean life, human interactions with the ocean, the ocean's physical geography, and
8 ocean-related environmental issues; and

9 (ii) The effects of ocean-related environmental issues on the environmental, energy, social,
10 and economic systems of the United States.

11 **16-112-3. Funding.**

12 There shall be an annual appropriation of no less than five hundred thousand dollars
13 (\$500,000) per fiscal year to invest in:

14 (1) Increasing capacity at established organizations running climate change and/or ocean
15 protection education programs that will enhance the climate and ocean literacy of Rhode Island
16 youth by broadening the understanding of climate change and ocean protection, including possible
17 long-term and short-term consequences, disproportionate impacts of those consequences, and
18 potential solutions;

19 (2) Applying the latest scientific and technological discoveries to provide formal and
20 nonformal learning opportunities to youth, including those of diverse cultural and linguistic
21 backgrounds; and

22 (3) Emphasizing actionable information to help young people understand and engage new
23 technologies, programs, and incentives related to climate change, climate adaptation and
24 mitigation, climate resilience, climate justice, environmental justice, and ocean protection.

25 **16-112-4. Grant program.**

26 (a) The department of labor and training shall disburse these funds to eligible recipients.

27 (b) Eligible recipients shall include:

28 (1) State educational agencies, in collaboration with local educational agencies and local
29 nonprofit organizations, for the implementation of climate and ocean literacy plans for formal and
30 nonformal climate change and ocean protection education for grades kindergarten through 12 (K-
31 12) that:

32 (i) Are aligned with state education standards;

33 (ii) Ensure that students graduate from high school with climate and ocean literacy;

34 (iii) Include relevant teacher training and professional development; and

1 (iv) Include at least one of the following:

2 (A) Integration of key climate change and ocean protection concepts into state education
3 standards for science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), civics and social studies,
4 and other relevant subject areas during the next revision of such standards.

5 (B) Development of climate change and ocean protection education frameworks and model
6 curricula and curation and dissemination of existing climate change and ocean protection
7 curriculum materials.

8 (C) Creation of applied learning project-based models, such as models making optimum
9 use of green features improvements to school facilities, such as energy systems, lighting systems,
10 water management, waste management, and school grounds improvements.

11 (D) Incorporation of climate change mitigation and blue and green technologies into new
12 and existing career and technical education career tracks and work-based learning experiences,
13 including development of partnerships with labor organizations, trade organizations, and
14 apprenticeship programs.

15 (2) Institutions of higher education and networks or partnerships of such institutions to
16 engage teams of faculty and students to develop applied climate research and deliver to local
17 communities direct services related to local climate mitigation and adaptation and ocean protection
18 issues, with priority given to projects that:

19 (i) Foster long-term campus-community partnerships;

20 (ii) Show potential to scale work beyond the grant term;

21 (iii) Incorporate faculty training and professional development;

22 (iv) Are inclusive for all segments of the population; and

23 (v) Promote equitable and just outcomes.

24 (3) Professional associations and academic disciplinary societies for projects that build
25 capacity at the state level for continuing education by practicing professionals and the general
26 public in blue and green economy fields.

27 (4) Youth development and nonprofit organization programs that engage in community-
28 based climate mitigation and adaptation and ocean protection work that includes a substantive
29 academic enrichment component.

30 (c)(1) The department of labor and training shall administer the grant program required by
31 subsection (a) of this section.

32 (2) The department of labor and training shall annually consult with other relevant agencies
33 of state and municipal government, nonprofit organizations, and community-based organizations
34 to determine ways in which grant making under subsection (b) of this section can enhance and

1 support climate change and ocean protection education and environmental justice goals.

2 (3) The department of labor and training shall direct at least forty percent (40%) of all funds
3 appropriated for grants under subsections (b)(2) and (b)(4) of this section to environmental justice
4 communities.

5 (4) The commission on postsecondary education shall establish communities of practice
6 with respect to each of subsections (b)(1) through (b)(4) of this section in order to accelerate
7 learning.

8 **16-112-5. Reporting.**

9 The department of labor and training shall report annually to the general assembly and the
10 governor no later than December 31 of each year on the status and progress of the program
11 authorized by this chapter.

12 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 -- THE RHODE ISLAND CLIMATE CHANGE AND OCEAN
PROTECTION EDUCATION PROGRAM ACT

1 This act would appropriate five hundred thousand dollars (\$500,000) per fiscal year to
2 invest in climate change and ocean protection education to enhance literacy of these issues for
3 Rhode Island's youth and would include a grant program.

4 This act would take effect upon passage.

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