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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2025

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A N A C T

RELATING TO TOWNS AND CITIES -- WARWICK PUBLIC SCHOOLS BUDGET
COMMISSION

Introduced By: Representatives McNamara, Shekarchi, Solomon, Bennett, and Read

Date Introduced: January 31, 2025

Referred To: House Education

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Title 45 of the General Laws entitled "TOWNS AND CITIES" is hereby
2 amended by adding thereto the following chapter:

3 CHAPTER 9.1

4 Warwick Public Schools Budget Commission

5 **45-9.1-1. Establishment.**

6 (a) There is hereby created the Warwick public schools budget commission.

7 (b) The Warwick public schools budget commission shall be subject to the provisions of
8 chapter 2 of title 38 ("access to public records"), chapter 14 of title 36 ("code of ethics"), and chapter
9 46 of title 42 ("open meetings").

10 (c) Notwithstanding any other provision of law to the contrary, action by the Warwick
11 public schools budget commission under this chapter shall constitute action by the school district
12 for all purposes under the general laws, under any special law, and under the Warwick city charter.

13 **45-9.1-2. Composition.**

14 The Warwick public schools budget commission shall consist of five (5) members; three
15 (3) of whom shall be designees of the mayor with the advice and consent of the city council; one
16 of whom shall be the designee of the Warwick superintendent of schools; and one of whom shall
17 be the designee of the chair of the Warwick school committee. One of the mayoral designees shall
18 serve as the chairperson by vote of the entire commission. No member of the commission shall be

1 an appointor or a Warwick elected official. Any vacancy that occurs in the commission membership
2 shall be filled in the same manner and process as which the person creating the vacancy was
3 appointed.

4 **45-9.1-3. Authority; Powers; Duties.**

5 (a) During the term of the Warwick public schools budget commission, no school spending
6 shall occur unless approved by the commission, or in the case of an emergency, by the city finance
7 director only to the extent to cure such emergency.

8 (b) The Warwick public schools budget commission shall have the power to:

9 (1) Amend, formulate, and execute the annual school budget;

10 (2) Implement and maintain uniform budget guidelines and procedures for the school
11 system as a whole;

12 (3) Amortize operational deficits in an amount as the city finance director approves and for
13 a term not longer than five (5) years;

14 (4) Develop and maintain a uniform system for all financial planning for the Warwick
15 public schools district;

16 (5) Employ, retain, and supervise such managerial, professional, and clerical staff as are
17 necessary to carry out its responsibilities; provided, however, that such employment, retention and
18 supervisory decisions are subject to the approval of the city finance director;

19 (6) Adopt rules and regulations governing the operation and administration of the school
20 district that permit the budget commission to effectively carry out its duties; and

21 (7) Compel operational, financial performance, or forensic audits, or any other similar
22 assessments.

23 (c) Within one hundred twenty (120) days of being appointed, the Warwick public schools
24 budget commission shall develop a three (3) year operating and capital financial plan to achieve
25 fiscal stability in the Warwick public schools district. The plan shall include a preliminary analysis
26 of the school district's financial situation and the Warwick public schools budget commission's
27 initial recommendations to immediately begin to address the operating and structural deficits.

28 **45-9.1-4. Expiration.**

29 The Warwick public schools budget commission shall cease to exist upon completion of
30 two (2) events as follows:

31 (1) Approval of the FY 2025-2026 Warwick school budget as recommended by the mayor
32 and approved by the city council; and

33 (2) Adoption of a deficit reduction plan by the commission as approved by the auditor
34 general.

1 **45-9.1-5. Exemptions.**

2 (a) Nothing in this chapter shall authorizes the Warwick public schools budget commission
3 to:

4 (1) Reject or alter any collective bargaining agreement;

5 (2) Eliminate the duty to bargain, as provided in chapter 9.3 of title 28 ("certified school
6 teachers' arbitration");

7 (3) Hire or terminate school department personnel;

8 (4) Impact projects funded by bond proceeds or make any decisions related thereto,
9 including, but not limited to, construction of new high schools.

10 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 TOWNS AND CITIES -- WARWICK PUBLIC SCHOOLS BUDGET
COMMISSION

1 This act would create the Warwick public schools budget commission consisting of five
2 (5) members to oversee the operations of Warwick public schools and to present a preliminary
3 analysis of the school district's financial situation, initial recommendations to immediately address
4 the operating and structural deficits, and a three (3) year financial plan to achieve fiscal stability.

5 This act would take effect upon passage.

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