

2019 -- S 0940

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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2019

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A N A C T

RELATING TO EDUCATION - THE EDUCATION EQUITY AND PROPERTY TAX RELIEF  
ACT

Introduced By: Senators Pearson, Gallo, Conley, McCaffrey, and Ruggerio

Date Introduced: May 30, 2019

Referred To: Senate Education

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Section 16-7.2-2 of the General Laws in Chapter 16-7.2 entitled "The  
2 Education Equity and Property Tax Relief Act" is hereby amended to read as follows:

3 ~~16-7.2-2. Joint legislative committee to establish a permanent education foundation~~  
4 ~~aid formula for Rhode Island.~~ **Joint committee on education funding formula.**

5 (a) There is hereby established a joint legislative committee to ~~develop a basic foundation~~  
6 ~~support program and an appropriate transition plan to fully implement a new funding system~~  
7 review, not less than bi-annually, the education funding formula established pursuant to this  
8 chapter, and assess whether it is meeting the needs of students, districts, and taxpayers. The  
9 committee shall also recommend to the governor, house of representatives, and senate any  
10 changes or modifications to the formula or the implementation of the formula.

11 (b) The committee shall consist of ~~ten (10)~~ fourteen (14) members, ~~five (5) of~~ four (4)  
12 members of the house of representatives which shall be appointed by the speaker of the house,  
13 one ~~(1)~~ of which shall be from the minority party, and ~~five (5)~~ four (4) members of the senate  
14 appointed by the president of the senate, one (1) of which shall be from the minority party. ~~The~~  
15 ~~speaker of the house and president of the senate shall each appoint a committee co-chair. The~~  
16 chairpersons of the house and senate finance subcommittees on education shall be members and  
17 serve as joint committee co-chairs. The chairpersons of the senate committee on finance, senate  
18 committee on education, house committee on finance, and house committee on health, education,

1 and welfare shall serve as ex officio members.

2 ~~The joint legislative committee is directed to consider the following framework in~~  
3 ~~developing a new education foundation support program:~~

4 ~~(1) A state education funding formula that is student population and needs driven.~~  
5 ~~Student counts should include enrollments, students eligible for free and reduced lunch, those~~  
6 ~~participating in language assistance programs, and special education. Provisions should be made~~  
7 ~~for those school districts that experience declining enrollments.~~

8 ~~(2) The accounting for "extraordinary special education expenditures" in special~~  
9 ~~education spending for one child in a given fiscal year.~~

10 ~~(3) A per pupil foundation amount to be used in the calculation of school funding. The~~  
11 ~~per pupil foundation amount should be based on what the cost is to provide an equitable and~~  
12 ~~adequate education, and consider various cost factors, such as pupil teacher ratios, teacher and~~  
13 ~~staff compensation, technology investments, educational supplies, teacher training and~~  
14 ~~professional development, student performance assessments, curriculum offerings and support~~  
15 ~~services and other costs associated with the delivery of educational services.~~

16 ~~(4) Per pupil cost, based on a least cost option plan to provide purchase of service~~  
17 ~~contracts in areas such as equipment, repair, benefits, transportation, general purchasing, capital~~  
18 ~~construction, data processing and health and other insurance programs. In addition, the~~  
19 ~~department of education should assist regional collaboratives in identifying opportunities to~~  
20 ~~maximize multiple school district participation for "high cost" programs.~~

21 ~~(5) Various methods of funding the system.~~

22 ~~(6) A transition education funding plan.~~

23 (c) The joint legislative committee review shall include, but not be limited to, the four (4)  
24 core principles of the education equity and property tax relief act, which are as follows:

25 (1) All children should have access to an adequate and meaningful education regardless  
26 of their residence or economic means;

27 (2) An education funding system should treat property taxpayers equitably, limit the  
28 portion of school budgets financed by property taxes, and establish sufficient cost controls on  
29 spending;

30 (3) The state should ensure that its education funding structure adequately reflects the  
31 different needs of students, and responds to educational inequities among the state's school  
32 districts; and

33 (4) The state education funding system should provide a predictable amount and source  
34 of funding to ensure stability in the funding of education aid.

1 ~~(b)(d)~~ The speaker of the house and president of the senate, in consultation with the The  
2 committee co-chairs, are hereby ~~directed~~ authorized to appoint a foundation aid technical  
3 advisory group, ~~and~~ a property tax relief technical advisory group, and any other advisory group  
4 deemed necessary by the committee co-chairs.

5 ~~(e)~~(e) The foundation aid technical advisory group shall advise and assist the committee  
6 as determined by the committee, which may include, but need not be limited to, ~~in~~ recommending  
7 and revising the foundation aid amounts by:

8 (1) Identifying specific resources and least cost options to provide every child the  
9 opportunity to necessary educational opportunities to meet education performance standards; and

10 (2) Systematically calculating the amount of per pupil funding necessary to support an  
11 effective and efficient educational system. The group may create task forces to consider the needs  
12 of special populations, comprehensive education programs, and noneducational support activities,  
13 composed of experts in these areas. In developing a foundation aid amount, the group shall  
14 consider, among other factors, pupil-teacher ratios, compensation, collective bargaining practices,  
15 technology investments, educational supplies, teacher training and professional development,  
16 student performance assessments, curriculum offerings and support services and all other costs  
17 and needs associated with the delivery of educational services.

18 ~~(d) The property tax relief technical advisory group shall advise and assist the committee~~  
19 ~~in identifying the options and the impact of replacing existing local education property tax levies~~  
20 ~~that support the funding of elementary and secondary education with other resources.~~

21 (f) The property tax relief technical advisory group shall advise and assist the committee  
22 as determined by the committee, which may include, but need not be limited to:

23 (1) Identifying options to fund the formula and related impacts to local property tax  
24 levies.

25 (2) Advising the committee on the appropriate level of funding by the state and local  
26 communities.

27 ~~(e)~~(g) The joint committee shall issue a report outlining its findings and recommendations  
28 no later than ~~May 15, 2007~~ December 15, 2019, and at least bi-annually thereafter. The governor  
29 shall consider the findings and recommendations for inclusion in the governor's annual budget  
30 submission.

31 All state agencies, ~~and~~ departments, local education agencies, municipalities, and state  
32 schools shall be directed to cooperate with and provide all necessary information to the joint  
33 legislative committee.

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1 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 EDUCATION EQUITY AND PROPERTY TAX RELIEF  
ACT

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1           This act would reconstitute the joint legislative committee to establish a permanent  
2 education foundation aid formula, to include the chairpersons of the house and senate finance  
3 sub-committees on education to serve as joint committee co-chairs, and the chairpersons of the  
4 senate committee on finance, senate committee on education, house committee on finance and  
5 house committee on health, education and welfare who would serve as ex officio members. The  
6 act would also amend the goals and mission of the committee.

7           This act would take effect upon passage.

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