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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2024

A N A C T

RELATING TO EDUCATION -- THE SCHOOL LIBRARIES ACT

Introduced By: Senators Mack, and Cano

Date Introduced: March 01, 2024

Referred To: Senate Education

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Legislative Findings

2 (1) School libraries are essential to schools as the research consistently shows that students
3 become better readers when they are provided with a wide variety of reading materials from which
4 they can select to read. School libraries and school librarians provide dynamic book collections
5 meeting all reading levels and spanning a variety of interests that allow students to choose their
6 reading materials. School libraries and school librarians foster a love of reading and a love of
7 learning that enables students to become life-long learners.

8 (2) School libraries and school librarians are essential in the instruction of information
9 literacy and media literacy in the age of limitless information sources, social media, misinformation
10 and disinformation. School librarians teach students to identify, evaluate and use information in
11 order to become competent researchers and ethical consumers and users of information.

12 (3) Research consistently demonstrates that in schools with well-equipped and stocked
13 school libraries staffed by certified school librarians, students achieve higher scores on standardized
14 tests.

15 (4) Students in all school districts deserve high quality school libraries. They deserve
16 books and information resources that meet their information needs and reading interests. They
17 deserve school librarians who teach them how to be life-long learners. They deserve libraries.

18 (5) In order to be college and career ready in the 21st century, students shall have access
19 to and be able to use vetted information resources including books, media, technology and the

1 Internet. All students shall be able to read, locate, evaluate and interpret information accurately for
2 academic and professional success. Even Google usage needs to be taught to use properly.

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

5 CHAPTER 114

6 THE SCHOOL LIBRARIES ACT

7 **16-114-1. Short title.**

8 This chapter shall be known and may be cited as the "The School Libraries Act ".

9 **16-114-2. A school library in every public school.**

10 Every public school in Rhode Island is required to have a school library or library media
11 center in a permanent and dedicated space. A school library or library media center shall include
12 the following essential elements:

13 (1) A collection of books and reading materials that is adequate for the student population
14 of the school in order that every student is offered a range of choices to meet their reading interests
15 and reading level and that supports the school curriculum;

16 (2) Appropriate space for students to read and study comfortably and for instruction to
17 occur;

18 (3) Adequate technology for students to utilize to access information resources, complete
19 school assignments and produce original work; and

20 (4) An automated system for the management of the library system.

21 **16-114-3. A certified school librarian assigned to every public school.**

22 (a) Every public school in Rhode Island is required to have a certified school librarian or
23 library media specialist to manage and maintain the library, provide information resources to
24 students and staff, promote reading and teach information literacy skills.

25 (b) All public schools in Rhode Island with populations of two hundred fifty (250) students
26 or more shall have at least one full-time certified library media specialist who is dedicated to
27 administering and supervising the school library media center. Public schools with fewer than two
28 hundred fifty (250) students shall have at least a part-time certified library media specialist who is
29 dedicated to administering and supervising the library media center. It is recommended that schools
30 of one thousand (1,000) students or more should hire an additional full or part-time library media
31 specialist and a library clerk.

32 **16-114-4. Student access to the school library and its resources.**

33 (a) Every public school in Rhode Island shall provide its students with access to the school
34 library or library media center and to the assistance of the school librarian during the school day

1 and beyond the school day when possible.

2 (b)(1) Public schools shall provide students with regular access to the school library or
3 library media center on a daily basis in order that students are aware of when and how they are
4 allowed to go to the library for book selection, reading, independent work, and other activities.

5 (2) This provision is required for all levels, kindergarten through grade twelve (K-12), and
6 shall include time other than "library class" time for elementary students. School librarians shall be
7 available during this open library time.

8 (c) Secondary schools shall provide access to students beyond the school day. This access
9 may include before-school, after-school and/or Saturday hours.

10 SECTION 3. This act shall take effect upon passage.

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EXPLANATION
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
OF
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RELATING TO EDUCATION -- THE SCHOOL LIBRARIES ACT

1 This act would require every public school in Rhode Island to have a school library or
2 library media center in a permanent and dedicated space available to students in grades K-12 with
3 a librarian available to permit access to the library for students before, during and after school
4 hours.

5 This act would take effect upon passage.

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