

2025 -- H 5980

=====
LC001371
=====

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2025

—————
A N A C T

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

Introduced By: Representatives Cortvriend, Carson, Boylan, McGaw, Speakman, and
Tanzi

Date Introduced: February 28, 2025

Referred To: House Finance

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Section 16-7.2-6 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 **16-7.2-6. Categorical programs, state funded expenses.**

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

6 (a) Excess costs associated with special education students. Excess costs are defined when
7 an individual special education student's cost shall be deemed to be "extraordinary." Extraordinary
8 costs are those educational costs that exceed the state-approved threshold based on an amount
9 above four times the core foundation amount (total of core instruction amount plus student success
10 amount). The department of elementary and secondary education shall prorate the funds available
11 for distribution among those eligible school districts if the total approved costs for which school
12 districts are seeking reimbursement exceed the amount of funding appropriated in any fiscal year;
13 and the department of elementary and secondary education shall also collect data on those
14 educational costs that exceed the state-approved threshold based on an amount above two (2), three
15 (3), and five (5) times the core foundation amount;

16 (b) Career and technical education costs to help meet initial investment requirements
17 needed to transform existing, or create new, comprehensive, career and technical education
18 programs and career pathways in critical and emerging industries and to help offset the higher-

1 than-average costs associated with facilities, equipment maintenance and repair, and supplies
2 necessary for maintaining the quality of highly specialized programs that are a priority for the state.
3 The department shall develop criteria for the purpose of allocating any and all career and technical
4 education funds as may be determined by the general assembly on an annual basis. The department
5 of elementary and secondary education shall prorate the funds available for distribution among
6 those eligible school districts if the total approved costs for which school districts are seeking
7 reimbursement exceed the amount of funding available in any fiscal year;

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

11 (d) Central Falls, Davies, and the Met Center Stabilization Fund is established to ensure
12 that appropriate funding is available to support their students. Additional support for Central Falls
13 is needed due to concerns regarding the city's capacity to meet the local share of education costs.
14 This fund requires that education aid calculated pursuant to § 16-7.2-3 and funding for costs outside
15 the permanent foundation education-aid formula, including, but not limited to, transportation,
16 facility maintenance, and retiree health benefits shall be shared between the state and the city of
17 Central Falls. The fund shall be annually reviewed to determine the amount of the state and city
18 appropriation. The state's share of this fund may be supported through a reallocation of current
19 state appropriations to the Central Falls school district. At the end of the transition period defined
20 in § 16-7.2-7, the municipality will continue its contribution pursuant to § 16-7-24. Additional
21 support for the Davies and the Met Center is needed due to the costs associated with running a
22 stand-alone high school offering both academic and career and technical coursework. The
23 department shall recommend criteria for the purpose of allocating any and all stabilization funds as
24 may be determined by the general assembly;

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

33 (f) Excess costs associated with transporting students within regional school districts. This
34 fund will provide direct state funding for the excess costs associated with transporting students

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

8 (1) Each school resource officer shall be assigned to one school:

9 (i) Schools with enrollments below one thousand two hundred (1,200) students shall
10 require one school resource officer;

11 (ii) Schools with enrollments of one thousand two hundred (1,200) or more students shall
12 require two school resource officers;

13 (2) School resource officers hired in excess of the requirement noted above shall not be
14 eligible for reimbursement; and

15 (3) Schools that eliminate existing school resource officer positions and create new
16 positions under this provision shall not be eligible for reimbursement; and

17 (j) Categorical programs defined in subsections (a) through (g) shall be funded pursuant to
18 the transition plan in § 16-7.2-7.

19 SECTION 2. Section 16-21.1-1 of the General Laws in Chapter 16-21.1 entitled
20 "Transportation of School Pupils Beyond City and Town Limits [See Title 16 Chapter 97 — The
21 Rhode Island Board of Education Act]" is hereby amended to read as follows:

22 **16-21.1-1. General purposes.**

23 This chapter shall be construed and applied to:

24 (1) Create a state plan for the busing of pupils beyond city or town limits, in recognition of
25 the legislative policy to encourage the establishment of and continuance of consolidated and
26 regional schools;

27 (2) Provide a unified statewide busing service;

28 (3) Afford to pupils who attend public schools the opportunity at the election of the school
29 committee of the city or town in which the pupils reside to attend a public school, either full time
30 or part time, outside of the city or town which provides a program or curriculum not available
31 within the city or town in which the pupil resides, as authorized by § 16-3.1-1 et seq.;

32 (4) Afford to children with disabilities equal educational opportunity;

33 (5) Afford bus transportation to pupils who attend nonpublic nonprofit schools which are
34 consolidated, regionalized, or otherwise established to serve residents of a specific area within the

1 state, ~~and who may be counted for purposes of reimbursement to cities and towns under the state~~
2 ~~aid formula provided by § 16-7-22 et seq.;~~ provided the nonpublic nonprofit schools who qualify
3 for statewide transportation pursuant to §16-21.1-2 share in the cost of transportation with the
4 sending school districts.

5 (6) Afford bus transportation to homeless students who may be counted for purposes of
6 reimbursement to cities and towns under the state aid formula provided by § 16-7-22 and the
7 provisions of chapter 7 of title 16;

8 ~~(6)~~(7) Conserve valuable natural resources by reducing the number of vehicles necessary
9 to transport pupils to school; and

10 ~~(7)~~(8) Provide for the transportation of public school students who attend schools located
11 outside of the city or town in which they reside, to protect the health, safety, and welfare of pupils
12 who live at such distances from the schools which they attend as to make it impractical or hazardous
13 to require the pupil to walk to school.

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

=====
LC001371
=====

EXPLANATION
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
OF

A N A C T

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

1 This act would amend categorical state funding to include excess costs associated with
2 transporting homeless students to out-of-district public schools. This act would also provide that
3 certain nonprofit nonpublic schools would share in the cost of transporting students with the
4 sending school districts.

5 This act would take effect upon passage.

=====
LC001371
=====