

2026 -- H 7318

LC004367

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2026

A N A C T

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

Introduced By: Representatives Cotter, Chippendale, Kennedy, Santucci, Speakman,  
Donovan, Spears, Casimiro, and Knight  
Date Introduced: January 23, 2026

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

32 (f) Excess costs associated with transporting students within regional school districts. This  
33 fund will provide direct state funding for the excess costs associated with transporting students  
34 within regional school districts, established pursuant to chapter 3 of this title. This fund requires

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

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

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

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

16 (3) The regionalization bonus in the first fiscal year shall be two percent (2.0%) of the  
17 state’s share of the foundation education aid for the regionalized district as calculated pursuant to  
18 §§ 16-7.2-3 and 16-7.2-4 in that fiscal year; provided, for those districts that regionalize or are  
19 regionalized before July 1, 2026, there shall be a bonus of six percent (6.0%) of the state’s share of  
20 foundation education aid for the regionalized school district as calculated pursuant §§ 16-7.2-3 and  
21 16-7.2-4 for fiscal year 2026-2027. Thereafter, any district that remains regionalized on and after  
22 July 1, 2026, and any district that regionalizes on or after July 1, 2026, then those districts shall  
23 receive a bonus of six percent (6.0%) of the state’s share of the foundation education aid for each  
24 fiscal year that the district is a regionalized school district. For those districts that regionalize after  
25 July 1, 2026, the first bonus shall be awarded in the first fiscal year following establishment of a  
26 regionalized school district. The regionalization bonus provided by this subsection shall be ongoing  
27 and continuing;

28 (4) ~~The regionalization bonus in the second fiscal year shall be one percent (1.0%) of the~~  
29 ~~state’s share of the foundation education aid for the regionalized district as calculated pursuant to~~  
30 ~~§§ 16-7.2-3 and 16-7.2-4 in that fiscal year;~~

31 (5) The regionalization bonus shall ~~cease in the third fiscal year~~ be ongoing and continuing,  
32 and be calculated pursuant to subsection (g)(3) of this section, but only for so long as the district  
33 remains a regionalized school district;

34 (6) The regionalization bonus for the Chariho regional school district shall be applied to

1 the state share of the permanent foundation education aid for the member towns; and

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

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

7 (i) State support for school resource officers. For purposes of this subsection, a school  
8 resource officer (SRO) shall be defined as a career law enforcement officer with sworn authority  
9 who is deployed by an employing police department or agency in a community-oriented policing  
10 assignment to work in collaboration with one or more schools. School resource officers should have  
11 completed at least forty (40) hours of specialized training in school policing, administered by an  
12 accredited agency, before being assigned. Beginning in FY 2019, for a period of three (3) years,  
13 school districts or municipalities that choose to employ school resource officers shall receive direct  
14 state support for costs associated with employing such officers at public middle and high schools.  
15 Districts or municipalities shall be reimbursed an amount equal to one-half (½) of the cost of  
16 salaries and benefits for the qualifying positions. Funding will be provided for school resource  
17 officer positions established on or after July 1, 2018, provided that:

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

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

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

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

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

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

29 SECTION 2. 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 EDUCATION EQUITY AND PROPERTY TAX  
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- 1           This act would increase the state’s regionalization bonus to six percent (6%) of the state’s  
2   fiscal year share of foundation education aid. This bonus would be ongoing and continuing so long  
3   as the district remains a regional school district.  
4           This act would take effect upon passage.

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