

2026 -- H 7498

LC004745

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2026

A N A C T

RELATING TO MOTOR AND OTHER VEHICLES -- OPERATORS' AND CHAUFFEURS' LICENSES

Introduced By: Representatives Fogarty, Casimiro, Boylan, Carson, Shallcross Smith, Spears, Kazarian, Handy, Alzate, and Hull

Date Introduced: February 04, 2026

Referred To: House State Government & Elections

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

SECTION 1. Section 31-10-20 of the General Laws in Chapter 31-10 entitled "Operators' and Chauffeurs' Licenses" is hereby amended to read as follows:

31-10-20. Driver education course requirement before licensing.

(a) No limited-instruction permit or license shall be issued to any person not more than eighteen (18) years of age unless that person shall have successfully completed a course of instruction as provided in § 31-10-19, or a similar course of instruction, conducted in a classroom setting or in an instructor-led virtual format, recognized by the state board of education as equivalent to it. The instructor-led virtual format course shall be permitted for a period of two (2) years from October 1, 2026 until October 1, 2028, and a report analyzing the test results of the instructor-led virtual instruction format as compared to the in-person classroom instruction format shall be provided by the state board of education to the speaker of the house and president of the senate no later than December 1, 2028. However, any person who is over eighteen (18) years of age and has been a holder of a motor vehicle operator's license issued to that person by any other state, territory, or possession of the United States, or any other sovereignty for a period of one year immediately prior to his or her application for a license under this chapter shall not be required to comply with the provisions of this section.

(b) Commencing on July 1, 2004, no limited-instruction permit or license shall be issued to any person not more than eighteen (18) years of age unless that person shall have successfully

1 completed a course of instruction as provided in § 31-10-19, or a similar course of instruction in
2 another state recognized by the state board of education as equivalent to it. In determining whether
3 a course is equivalent, the state board of education shall at a minimum require: (1) That the course
4 consist of at least thirty-three (33) instructional hours that substantially conform with the current
5 curriculum utilized by the instructor(s) at the Community College of Rhode Island, including a
6 minimum of three (3) hours of instruction focusing upon specific Rhode Island traffic laws, the
7 specific requirements of the Rhode Island graduated-licensing statute in § 31-10-6, and eight (8)
8 hours specifically for instruction on the effects of alcohol and drugs on a driver. All driver's
9 education programs shall include information concerning the Revised Uniform Anatomical Gift
10 Act, chapter 18.6.1 of title 23, and information on donor cards pursuant to the applicable provisions
11 of chapter 18.6.1 of title 23; (2) That the instructor holds a valid teacher's certificate; (3) That the
12 instructor satisfactorily completes at least a three-credit (3) course in traffic safety education at an
13 accredited institution of higher education; and (4) That the program does not offer outside the
14 classroom road test instruction or driving lessons to Rhode Island students. However, any person
15 who is over eighteen (18) years of age and has been a holder of a motor vehicle operator's license
16 issued to that person by any other state, territory, or possession of the United States, or any other
17 sovereignty for a period of one year immediately prior to his or her application for a license under
18 this chapter shall not be required to comply with the provisions of this section.

19 (c) The driver's education course and driver's license examination shall include material
20 pertaining to a driver's rights and responsibilities when stopped by a law enforcement officer as
21 explained during the driver education course, including, but not limited to, rights provided to
22 drivers pursuant to chapter 21.2 of title 31, the "comprehensive community-police relationship act
23 of 2015."

24 SECTION 2. This act shall take effect upon passage.

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EXPLANATION
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
OF
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- 1 This act would authorize driver education schools to offer the driver training curriculum in
- 2 a classroom setting or an instructor-led virtual format for a two (2) year period from October 1,
- 3 2026 to October 1, 2028 after which a report analyzing test results would be provided by the board
- 4 of education.
- 5 This act would take effect upon passage.

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