

2026 -- H 8266

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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2026

HOUSE RESOLUTION

CREATING A SPECIAL LEGISLATIVE COMMISSION TO STUDY EXPANDING
PATHWAYS INTO THE TEACHING PROFESSION

Introduced By: Representatives Diaz, Slater, Batista, Giraldo, Stewart, Alzate, Hull, J.
Lombardi, Furtado, and Edwards

Date Introduced: March 11, 2026

Referred To: House Education

1 WHEREAS, Rhode Island is experiencing persistent educator shortages, rising burnout,
2 and barriers to entry into the teaching profession, particularly in high-need subject areas including
3 special education, bilingual and multilingual education, science, technology, engineering and
4 mathematics (STEM), and career and technical education (CTE); and

5 WHEREAS, These shortages disproportionately affect high-need schools and students,
6 resulting in vacancies, long-term substitutes, and underprepared instructional staff; and

7 WHEREAS, Lowering professional standards is not an acceptable or effective response
8 to workforce shortages; and

9 WHEREAS, Removing unnecessary barriers, reducing outdated administrative
10 requirements, and strengthening preparation, mentorship, and accountability can expand access to
11 the profession while maintaining rigorous expectations for educator effectiveness; and

12 WHEREAS, Teaching should be treated as a critical workforce pipeline, an equity
13 imperative, and a student-success strategy; and

14 WHEREAS, Rhode Island is well positioned to lead nationally in modernizing educator
15 pathways due to its size, governance structure, and history of innovation; now, therefore be it

16 RESOLVED, That a special legislative study commission be and the same is hereby
17 created consisting of seventeen (17) members to be appointed by the Speaker of the House:

18 Two (2) of whom shall be members of the House of Representatives to serve as co-chairs
19 of the commission;

1 One of whom shall be the Commissioner of the Rhode Island Department of Education,
2 or designee;

3 One of whom shall be the Rhode Island Commissioner of Postsecondary Education, or
4 designee;

5 One of whom shall be a representative of the Rhode Island Federation of Teachers or the
6 National Education Association of Rhode Island;

7 One of whom shall be a representative of the Rhode Island League of Charter Public
8 Schools;

9 One of whom shall be a representative of the Rhode Island Mayoral Academies;

10 One of whom shall be the President of the Rhode Island Association of School Principals,
11 or designee;

12 One of whom shall be the President of the Rhode Island School Superintendents
13 Association, or designee;

14 One of whom shall be a representative of an alternative certification provider;

15 One of whom shall be a member of the public who works for a nonprofit entity
16 specializing in job training;

17 Two (2) of whom shall be classroom teachers (one of whom will be from a charter public
18 school, one of whom will be from a district public school);

19 Four (4) of whom shall be members of the public who work for a nonprofit entity
20 specializing in education.

21 The purpose of said study commission shall be to study, evaluate, and make
22 recommendations regarding educator preparation, licensure, certification, and early-career
23 support systems in the state.

24 The commission shall examine existing systems and issue recommendations designed to:

25 (1) Expand access to the teaching profession while maintaining rigorous expectations for
26 effectiveness and professionalism;

27 (2) Align educator preparation and licensure requirements with classroom realities and
28 student needs;

29 (3) Improve recruitment, retention, and workforce diversity;

30 (4) Reduce unnecessary administrative, financial, and structural barriers that do not
31 improve student outcomes; and

32 (5) Strengthen accountability systems that support growth, effectiveness, and retention.

33 In carrying out its charge, the commission shall study and develop recommendations
34 aligned to the following policy pillars:

1 (a) Multiple, Legitimate Pathways into the Classroom.

2 The commission shall design and normalize multiple routes into teaching including, but
3 not limited to:

4 (1) Modernized traditional certification pathways, including accelerated timelines,
5 increased paid clinical practice, reduced duplicative coursework, and credit for prior professional
6 or instructional experience;

7 (2) Expanded and protected alternative certification pathways for career changers,
8 paraprofessionals, and professionals from high-need fields, including provisional licensure paired
9 with paid teaching and structured coaching and mentorship;

10 (3) Grow-your-own pathways, including high school teacher academies, dual enrollment
11 and early college tracks, paraprofessional-to-teacher pipelines, and community-based educator
12 pathways; and

13 (4) Interstate and international mobility pathways, including faster reciprocity for
14 licensed educators from other states and streamlined pathways for internationally trained teachers.

15 (b) Making Teaching Financially Possible.

16 The commission shall examine and recommend financial supports that make entry into
17 teaching economically viable, including:

18 (1) Paid teacher residencies in lieu of unpaid student teaching;

19 (2) Tuition-free or reduced-cost certification and licensure programs;

20 (3) Student loan forgiveness for service in high-need schools and subject areas; and

21 (4) Targeted stipends or incentives for bilingual, special education, STEM, and CTE
22 educators.

23 (c) Simplifying Process While Preserving Support.

24 The commission shall identify licensure and preparation requirements that do not
25 demonstrably improve student outcomes and recommend reforms including:

26 (1) Eliminating duplicative testing requirements;

27 (2) Replacing seat-time requirements with competency-based benchmarks;

28 (3) Allowing demonstration of mastery through performance-based measures; and

29 (4) Removing barriers that disproportionately exclude candidates from historically
30 underrepresented backgrounds.

31 (d) Accountability that Builds, Not Punishes.

32 The commission shall recommend accountability structures that emphasize growth and
33 effectiveness, including:

34 (1) Required mentorship for all new teachers;

- 1 (2) Structured coaching during the first two (2) to three (3) years of practice;
- 2 (3) Clear performance benchmarks for continuation in the profession; and
- 3 (4) Defined exit pathways for candidates who do not meet established standards,
- 4 consistent with any collective bargaining agreements and with due process protections.
- 5 (e) Rhode Island as a Leader in Educator Workforce Innovation.

6 The commission shall explore strategies to position Rhode Island as a leader in educator

7 workforce innovation, including:

- 8 (1) Piloting new preparation and certification models in partnership with school districts
- 9 and charter schools;
- 10 (2) Publishing annual data on educator recruitment, retention, diversity, and
- 11 effectiveness;
- 12 (3) Seeking federal, philanthropic, or private matching funds to support implementation;
- 13 and
- 14 (4) Sharing best practices and lessons learned at the national level.

15 The study commission shall agree upon any findings by a majority vote of the total

16 membership of the study commission;

17 Vacancies in said commission shall be filled in like manner as the original appointment.

18 The membership of said commission shall receive no compensation for their services.

19 All departments and agencies of the State shall furnish such advice and information,

20 documentary and otherwise, to said commission and its agents as is deemed necessary or

21 desirable by the commission to facilitate the purposes of this resolution.

22 The Joint Committee on Legislative Services is hereby authorized and directed to provide

23 suitable quarters for said commission; and be it further

24 RESOLVED, That the commission shall submit an interim report of its preliminary

25 findings and recommendations to the Speaker of the House no later than nine (9) months after the

26 passage of this resolution, and shall submit a final report of its findings and recommendations to

27 the Speaker of the House no later than twelve (12) months after the passage of this resolution and

28 said commission shall expire on September 1, 2027.

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EXPLANATION
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
OF
HOUSE RESOLUTION
CREATING A SPECIAL LEGISLATIVE COMMISSION TO STUDY EXPANDING
PATHWAYS INTO THE TEACHING PROFESSION

1 This resolution would create a special legislative commission of seventeen (17) members
2 whose purpose would be to study, evaluate and make recommendations regarding educator
3 preparation, licensure, certification and early-career support systems in the state expanding
4 pathways into the teaching profession.

5 The commission would submit an interim report nine (9) months after passage and a final
6 report twelve (12) months after passage to the speaker of the House and would expire on
7 September 1, 2027.

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