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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2026

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A N A C T

RELATING TO EDUCATION -- RHODE ISLAND HOPE SCHOLARSHIP PILOT
PROGRAM ACT

Introduced By: Representatives McNamara, Alzate, Hull, Shanley, O'Brien, Phillips,
Bennett, Batista, Azzinaro, and Noret

Date Introduced: March 20, 2026

Referred To: House Finance

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. The title of Chapter 16-113 of the General Laws entitled "Rhode Island Hope
2 Scholarship Pilot Program Act" is hereby amended to read as follows:

3 ~~CHAPTER 16-113~~

4 ~~Rhode Island Hope Scholarship Pilot Program Act~~

5 CHAPTER 16-113

6 RHODE ISLAND HOPE SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM ACT

7 SECTION 2. Sections 16-113-1, 16-113-2, 16-113-3, 16-113-4 and 16-113-7 of the
8 General Laws in Chapter 16-113 entitled "Rhode Island Hope Scholarship Pilot Program Act" are
9 hereby amended to read as follows:

10 **16-113-1. Short title.**

11 This chapter shall be known and may be cited as the "Rhode Island Hope Scholarship ~~Pilot~~
12 Program Act".

13 **16-113-2. Legislative findings and purpose.**

14 (a) The general assembly finds and declares that:

15 (1) Education is critical for the state's young people to achieve their aspirations and
16 develop their talents;

17 (2) The state's economic success depends on a highly educated and skilled workforce;

18 (3) The state's future prosperity depends upon its ability to make educational opportunities

1 beyond high school available for all students;

2 (4) The coronavirus has inflicted undue hardships on students and their families, creating
3 barriers to a four-year (4) college degree;

4 (5) A merit-based tuition reduction program will help make a four-year (4) college degree
5 available to all students;

6 (6) Rhode Island college offers students a feasible opportunity to obtain a four-year (4)
7 degree, but remains an underutilized resource in the state; and

8 (7) The state of Rhode Island's motto is "Hope".

9 (b) In order to address the findings set forth in subsection (a) of this section, the purpose
10 of this chapter is to increase the number of students enrolling in and completing four-year (4)
11 degrees and certificates on time from Rhode Island college, and to promote more graduates in high-
12 need fields such as nursing, pre-K through grade twelve (12) education, and the trades, which are
13 fields for which Rhode Island college provides a strong and affordable education.

14 ~~(c) The purpose of the pilot program is also to determine whether a scholarship program~~
15 ~~for Rhode Island college that is modeled on the promise scholarship program established in chapter~~
16 ~~107 of this title would be successful in attaining the goals set forth in this section.~~

17 **16-113-3. Establishment of scholarship program.**

18 There is hereby established the Rhode Island hope scholarship ~~pilot~~ program. The general
19 assembly shall annually appropriate the funds necessary to implement the purposes of this chapter
20 ~~for the periods of the pilot program.~~ Additional funds beyond the scholarships may be appropriated
21 to support and advance the Rhode Island hope scholarship ~~pilot~~ program. In addition to
22 appropriation by the general assembly, charitable donations may be accepted into the scholarship
23 program.

24 **16-113-4. Definitions.**

25 When used in this chapter, the following terms shall have the following meanings:

26 (1) "ADA" means the Americans with Disabilities Act, 42 U.S.C. § 12101 et seq., as may
27 be amended from time to time.

28 (2) "Certificate" means any certificate program with labor market value as defined by the
29 postsecondary commissioner.

30 (3) "College-level credit" means credit awarded by a college or university for completion
31 of its own courses or other academic work.

32 (4) "FAFSA" means the Free Application for Federal Student Aid form.

33 (5) "General education coursework" means the educational foundation of knowledge,
34 skills, and attitudes that prepares students for success in their majors and their personal and

1 professional lives after graduation. It includes, but is not limited to, the required coursework of all
2 degrees developed by each eligible postsecondary institution that is approved by the council on
3 postsecondary education that is intended to ensure that all graduates of a state institution have a
4 balanced core of competencies and knowledge. This does not necessarily include coursework
5 specifically required for one's major.

6 (6) "Mandatory fees and tuition" means the costs that every student is required to pay in
7 order to enroll in classes, and does not include room and board, textbooks, program fees that may
8 exist in some majors, course fees that may exist for some specific courses, meal plans, or travel.

9 (7) "On track to graduate on time" means the standards determined by Rhode Island college
10 in establishing the expectation of a student to graduate with a bachelor's degree within four (4)
11 years of enrollment, or the prescribed completion time for a student completing a certificate
12 (recognizing that some students, including students who require developmental education, are
13 double majors, or are enrolled in certain professional programs may require an extended time period
14 for degree completion).

15 (8) "~~Pilot program~~ Program" ~~and or~~ "scholarship program" means the Rhode Island hope
16 scholarship ~~pilot~~ program that is established pursuant to § 16-113-3.

17 (9) "Reasonable accommodations" means any necessary modifications or adjustment to a
18 facility, equipment, program, or manner of operation as required by the Americans with Disabilities
19 Act ("ADA") and section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, 29 U.S.C. § 791, as may be
20 amended from time to time.

21 (10) "Recipient student" means a student attending Rhode Island college who qualifies to
22 receive the Rhode Island hope scholarship pursuant to § 16-113-6.

23 (11) "State" means the state of Rhode Island.

24 (12) "Student with a disability" means any student otherwise eligible pursuant to this
25 chapter who has a physical, developmental, or hidden disability or disabilities, as defined in § 42-
26 87-1, that would create a hardship or other functional obstacles preventing participation in this
27 program.

28 **16-113-7. Reporting and disbursement.**

29 (a) On or before November 10, 2023, and on or before November 10 and May 10 ~~thereafter~~
30 ~~for every year through and including calendar year 2030~~ of each fiscal year following fiscal year
31 2024, Rhode Island college shall submit a report to the director of the office of management and
32 budget, the state budget officer, the house fiscal advisor, the senate fiscal advisor, the commissioner
33 of postsecondary education, and the chair of the council on postsecondary education, detailing the
34 following:

- 1 (1) The number of students eligible to participate in the scholarship program;
- 2 (2) The amount of federal and institutional financial aid anticipated to be received by
3 recipient students;
- 4 (3) The aggregate tuition and mandatory fee costs attributable to recipient students;
- 5 (4) The resulting total cost of the scholarship program to the state; and
- 6 (5) The report shall contain such data for both the current fiscal year and the most up-to-
7 date forecast for the following fiscal year. Data reported shall be subdivided by student-year cohort
8 and shall be accompanied by a written explanation detailing the estimating methodology utilized
9 and any impact(s) the forecasted data may present to institutional capacity, operational costs, and
10 the tuition/fee revenue base of the institution.

11 (b) On or before July 1, 2030, Rhode Island college and the commissioner of postsecondary
12 education shall submit a report evaluating the program based on all cohorts to the governor, speaker
13 of the house, and the president of the senate. This evaluation shall include the following:

- 14 (1) The number of students who started in each cohort;
- 15 (2) The number of students in each cohort who have attained a degree or certification in an
16 on-time manner;
- 17 (3) The number of students in each cohort who have not attained a degree or certification
18 in an on-time manner and an analysis of why that has happened;
- 19 (4) The number of students in each cohort who began the program but have been unable to
20 continue or complete the program and an analysis of why that has happened;
- 21 (5) The costs of the program and the costs of continuing the program;
- 22 (6) Suggestions for ways to increase the success of the program;
- 23 (7) Recommendations as to modifying, continuing, expanding, curtailing, or discontinuing
24 the program; and
- 25 (8) Any such other recommendations or information as Rhode Island college and the
26 commissioner of postsecondary education deem appropriate to include in the evaluation.

27 (c) The office of management and budget, in consultation with the office of the
28 postsecondary commissioner, shall oversee the apportionment and disbursement of all funds
29 appropriated for the purpose of the scholarship program.

30 SECTION 3. Section 16-113-10 of the General Laws in Chapter 16-113 entitled "Rhode
31 Island Hope Scholarship Pilot Program Act" is hereby repealed.

32 **16-113-10. Funding of and sunset of pilot program.**

33 ~~The Rhode Island hope scholarship pilot program shall be funded from July 1, 2023,~~
34 ~~through and including June 30, 2030. There shall be no further funding of the pilot program without~~

1 ~~further action of the general assembly. Any final reports due pursuant to this chapter shall be filed~~
2 ~~pursuant to the dates set forth herein.~~

3 SECTION 4. This act shall take effect upon passage.

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EXPLANATION
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
OF

A N A C T

RELATING TO EDUCATION -- RHODE ISLAND HOPE SCHOLARSHIP PILOT
PROGRAM ACT

1 This act would convert the Rhode Island Hope Scholarship Pilot Program Act into a
2 continuing scholarship program at Rhode Island College, similar to the Rhode Island Promise
3 Scholarship at the Community College of Rhode Island.

4 This act would take effect upon passage.

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