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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2025

A N A C T

RELATING TO EDUCATION -- SCHOOL COMMITTEES AND SUPERINTENDENTS --
CENTRAL FALLS SCHOOL DISTRICT

Introduced By: Senator Jonathon Acosta

Date Introduced: May 09, 2025

Referred To: Senate Housing & Municipal Government

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

SECTION 1. Section 16-2-34 of the General Laws in Chapter 16-2 entitled "School Committees and Superintendents [See Title 16 Chapter 97 — The Rhode Island Board of Education Act]" is hereby amended to read as follows:

16-2-34. ~~Central Falls School District board of trustees.~~ Central Falls school district school board.

(a) The city of Central Falls is hereby empowered, via home rule charter and/or city ordinance, to create a school board and all powers and duties thereto ~~There is hereby established a seven (7) member board of trustees,~~ which shall govern the Central Falls School District. ~~With the exception of those powers and duties reserved by the commissioner of elementary and secondary education, and the board of regents for elementary and secondary education, the board of trustees shall have the powers and duties of school committees. Notwithstanding any provision of law to the contrary, the commissioner of elementary and secondary education, as the executive agent of the board of regents for elementary and secondary education, is authorized to exercise in whole or in part care, control, and management over the public schools of the Central Falls school district within the scope of authority of the board of trustees and board of regents, whenever the commissioner deems such intervention to be necessary and appropriate.~~

(b) ~~The board of regents for elementary and secondary education shall appoint the members of the board of trustees from nominations made by the commissioner of elementary and secondary~~

1 ~~education. The chairperson shall also be selected in this manner. The board of regents shall~~
2 ~~determine the number, qualifications, and terms of office of members of the board of trustees,~~
3 ~~provided however, that at least four (4) of the members shall be residents of the city and parents of~~
4 ~~current or former Central Falls public school students. The remaining three (3) shall be appointed~~
5 ~~at large.~~

6 (c) ~~The board of regents shall provide parameters for overall budget requests, approve the~~
7 ~~budget, and otherwise participate in budget development.~~

8 (d) ~~The commissioner of elementary and secondary education shall recommend parameters~~
9 ~~for overall budget requests, recommend a budget, and otherwise participate in budget development.~~

10 (e) ~~The commissioner shall approve the process for selection of the superintendent.~~

11 (f) The ~~board of trustees~~ school board shall meet at least monthly and may serve ~~without~~
12 with compensation as determined by the Central Falls home rule charter and/or city ordinance. The
13 school board shall maintain a strong focus on and clear systems for listening to the people most
14 impacted by their decisions— families, students, and educators. The ~~board of trustees~~ school board
15 shall have broad policy making authority for the operation of the ~~school~~ schools, as well as the
16 following powers and duties:

17 (1) To identify the educational needs of the district;

18 (2) To provide policy guidance and develop educational policies to meet the needs of
19 students in the school district;

20 (3) To appoint a superintendent to serve as its chief executive officer, and regularly
21 evaluate the performance of the superintendent, and to approve assistant and associate
22 superintendents from nominations made by the superintendent;

23 (4) ~~To provide policy guidance and otherwise participate in budget development~~ To lead a
24 transparent public process in the development of an annual budget and to approve that budget; and

25 (5) To develop staffing policies which ensure that all students are taught by educators of
26 the highest possible quality.

27 (g) The superintendent shall serve at the pleasure of the ~~board of trustees~~ school board with
28 the initial appointment to be for a period of not more than three (3) years; provided, however, that
29 the terms and conditions of employment are subject to the approval of the ~~board of regents for~~
30 ~~elementary and secondary education~~ mayor of the city of Central Falls.

31 (h) It shall be the responsibility of the superintendent to lead ~~manage and operate~~ the school
32 district on a day-to-day basis. The superintendent's duties shall include the following:

33 (1) To be responsible for the care, supervision, and management of the schools;

34 (2) To recommend to the ~~board of trustees~~ school board educational policies to meet the

1 needs of the district, and to implement policies established by the ~~board of trustees~~ school board;

2 (3) To present nominations to the ~~board of trustees~~ school board for assistant and associate

3 superintendents and to appoint all other school personnel;

4 (4) To provide for the evaluation of all school district personnel;

5 (5) To establish a school based management approach for decision making for the operation

6 of the ~~school~~ schools;

7 (6) To prepare a budget and otherwise participate in budget development as required, and

8 to authorize purchases consistent with the adopted school district budget;

9 (7) To report to the ~~board of trustees~~ school board, on a regular basis, the educational

10 progress, financial condition and operation of the schools, and to report at least annually on the

11 educational ~~progress~~ performance of the schools;

12 (8) To establish appropriate advisory committees as needed to provide guidance on new

13 directions and feedback on the operation of the schools;

14 (9) With policy guidance from the ~~board of trustees~~ school board and extensive

15 involvement of the administrators and faculty in the school, to annually prepare a budget. ~~The board~~

16 ~~of trustees shall approve the budget and transmit it to the commissioner. The board of regents for~~

17 ~~elementary and secondary education, upon recommendation of the commissioner of elementary~~

18 ~~and secondary education, shall provide parameters for the overall budget request. Based on review~~

19 ~~and recommendation by the commissioner, the board of regents shall approve the total budget and~~

20 ~~incorporate it into its budget request to the governor and to the general assembly. Line item~~

21 ~~budgeting decisions shall be the responsibility of the superintendent~~ and to submit it to the school

22 board for hearing and consideration; and

23 (10) To negotiate, along with the chairperson of the ~~board of trustees~~ school board and his

24 or her appointed designee, all district employment contracts, which contracts shall be subject to the

25 approval of the ~~commissioner of elementary and secondary education with the concurrence of the~~

26 ~~board of regents~~ school board.

27 (i) Nothing in this section shall be deemed to limit or otherwise interfere with the rights of

28 teachers and other school employees to bargain collectively pursuant to chapters 9.3 and 9.4 of title

29 28, to exercise rights afforded under any statute including, but not limited to, Title 16, or to allow

30 the commissioner, ~~board of trustees~~ school board, or the superintendent to abrogate any agreement

31 by collective bargaining.

32 (j) ~~The appointment of the special state administrator for the Central Falls School District~~

33 ~~and the Central Falls School District Advisory Group, created by chapter 312 of the Rhode Island~~

34 ~~Public Laws of 1991, will no longer be in effect upon the selection and appointment of the board~~

~~of trustees created in this section. All powers and duties of the special state administrator and the Central Falls School District Advisory Group are hereby transferred and assigned to the board of trustees created in this section, upon the selection and appointment of that board.~~

SECTION 2. Section 16-7.2-6 of the General Laws in Chapter 16-7.2 entitled "The Education Equity and Property Tax Relief Act" is hereby amended to read as follows:

16-7.2-6. Categorical programs, state funded expenses.

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

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

(b) Career and technical education costs to help meet initial investment requirements needed to transform existing, or create new, comprehensive, career and technical education programs and career pathways in critical and emerging industries and to help offset the higher-than-average costs associated with facilities, equipment maintenance and repair, and supplies necessary for maintaining the quality of highly specialized programs that are a priority for the state. The department shall develop criteria for the purpose of allocating any and all career and technical education funds as may be determined by the general assembly on an annual basis. The department of elementary and secondary education shall prorate the funds available for distribution among those eligible school districts if the total approved costs for which school districts are seeking reimbursement exceed the amount of funding available in any fiscal year;

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

(d) Central Falls, Davies, and the Met Center Stabilization Fund is established to ensure that appropriate funding is available to support their students. Additional support for Central Falls is needed due to ~~concerns regarding~~ the city's limited capacity to meet the local share of education

1 costs. The total amount allocated to the Central Falls stabilization fund shall be the difference
2 between the total foundation amount and state formula aid, pursuant to § 16-7.2-3, plus funding for
3 all costs outside the permanent foundation education-aid formula, calculated based on the most
4 recently published UCOA (Universal Charter of Accounts) expenditures data for the Central Falls
5 school district, adjusted for inflation and the percentage change in the resident average daily
6 membership for the city of Central Falls. This fund requires that education aid calculated pursuant
7 to § 16-7.2-3 and funding for costs outside the permanent foundation education-aid formula,
8 including, but not limited to, transportation, facility maintenance, ~~and~~ retiree health benefit, tuition
9 payments for outplaced special education students, and tuition payments to other public schools,
10 shall be shared between the state and the city of Central Falls. ~~The fund shall be annually reviewed~~
11 ~~to determine the amount of the state and city appropriation.~~ The city appropriation shall be equal
12 to the annual revenue distributed to the city of Central Falls via § 45-13-5.1. ~~The state's share of~~
13 ~~this fund may be supported through a reallocation of current state appropriations to the Central~~
14 ~~Falls school district. At the end of the transition period defined in § 16-7.2-7, the municipality will~~
15 ~~continue its contribution pursuant to § 16-7-24.~~ Additional support for the Davies and the Met
16 Center is needed due to the costs associated with running a stand-alone high school offering both
17 academic and career and technical coursework. The department shall recommend criteria for the
18 purpose of allocating ~~any and all~~ Davies and the Met Center stabilization funds as may be
19 determined by the general assembly;

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

27 (f) Excess costs associated with transporting students within regional school districts. This
28 fund will provide direct state funding for the excess costs associated with transporting students
29 within regional school districts, established pursuant to chapter 3 of this title. This fund requires
30 that the state and regional school district share equally the student transportation costs net any
31 federal sources of revenue for these expenditures. The department of elementary and secondary
32 education shall prorate the funds available for distribution among those eligible school districts if
33 the total approved costs for which school districts are seeking reimbursement exceed the amount
34 of funding available in any fiscal year;

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

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

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

11 (3) The regionalization bonus in the first fiscal year shall be two percent (2.0%) of the
12 state’s share of the foundation education aid for the regionalized district as calculated pursuant to
13 §§ 16-7.2-3 and 16-7.2-4 in that fiscal year;

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

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

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

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

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

25 (i) State support for school resource officers. For purposes of this subsection, a school
26 resource officer (SRO) shall be defined as a career law enforcement officer with sworn authority
27 who is deployed by an employing police department or agency in a community-oriented policing
28 assignment to work in collaboration with one or more schools. School resource officers should have
29 completed at least forty (40) hours of specialized training in school policing, administered by an
30 accredited agency, before being assigned. Beginning in FY 2019, for a period of three (3) years,
31 school districts or municipalities that choose to employ school resource officers shall receive direct
32 state support for costs associated with employing such officers at public middle and high schools.
33 Districts or municipalities shall be reimbursed an amount equal to one-half (½) of the cost of
34 salaries and benefits for the qualifying positions. Funding will be provided for school resource

1 officer positions established on or after July 1, 2018, provided that:

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

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

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

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

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

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

13 SECTION 3. Section 1 of this act shall take effect January 1, 2026. The remaining sections
14 of 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 -- SCHOOL COMMITTEES AND SUPERINTENDENTS --
CENTRAL FALLS SCHOOL DISTRICT

1 This act would authorize the city of Central Falls, via home rule charter or city ordinance,
2 to create a school board with all powers and duties thereto, to govern the Central Falls school
3 district. The act would also amend the provisions for the calculation of the total allocation to the
4 Central Falls stabilization fund and of Central Falls’ share of the stabilization fund to support the
5 Central Falls school district.

6 Section 1 of this act shall take effect January 1, 2026. The remaining sections of this act
7 shall take effect upon passage.

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