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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2026

A N A C T

RELATING TO EDUCATION -- SCHOOL COMMITTEES AND SUPERINTENDENTS

Introduced By: Senators Acosta, Gallo, Raptakis, Mack, Zurier, Bissaillon, Valverde,
DiPalma, Murray, and McKenney
Date Introduced: January 09, 2026

Referred To: Senate Education

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

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

4 **16-2-2. City and town schools required — School year — Location — Kindergartens.**

5 (a)(1) Except as specifically provided in this section, every city or town shall establish and
6 maintain for at least one hundred eighty (180) days annually or the equivalent thereof, exclusive of
7 holidays, a sufficient number of schools in convenient places under the control and management of
8 the school committee and under the supervision of the Rhode Island Board of Education. In lieu of
9 a convenient location, the school committee may provide transportation for pupils to and from
10 school in accordance with the provisions of chapter 21 of this title. Provided, that a school district
11 may establish a school year that is the equivalent of one hundred eighty (180) days through the use
12 of longer school days or combination of longer and shorter school days in terms of school hours,
13 or pursuant to subsection (c) of this section, and that may total less than one hundred eighty (180)
14 separate days, so long as through the use of longer school days or through the use of a combination
15 of longer and shorter school days, the school district annually provides a minimum of one thousand
16 eighty (1,080) school hours in a single school year. For purposes of clarification, the intent herein
17 is to permit school districts flexibility in the delivery of educational services, but to ensure that in
18 doing so, school districts shall still provide one thousand eighty (1,080) school hours in a single
19 school year and shall still provide any instructional hours minimum in a single school year.

1 Provided, however, that the flexibility granted herein also applies to a daily instructional hours
2 minimum otherwise required by the Rhode Island Board of Education or by the department of
3 elementary and secondary education. Nothing herein shall be deemed to limit a school district from
4 exceeding the minimum amounts of days and hours set forth herein. Provided further, that the
5 academic school year for all public schools, including traditional public schools, district charter
6 schools, independent charter schools, and mayoral academies, shall start on the same date of each
7 calendar year, which date shall be determined by the department of elementary and secondary
8 education.

9 (2) School districts intending to make use of the flexibility provided herein shall submit a
10 detailed school day plan and a proposed school calendar to the commissioner of elementary and
11 secondary education for approval. The commissioner shall review the submitted school day plan
12 and the submitted calendar to determine whether the plan and calendar are academically sound and
13 fiscally efficient. The commissioner shall not unreasonably deny the plan and/or the calendar.

14 (3) Professional development, including common planning time, is critically important to
15 provide the best instruction for students, meet legislative requirements, and maintain best practices.
16 For this reason, districts are allowed the flexible use early release days; provided that districts meet
17 the yearly requirement of one thousand eighty (1,080) school hours.

18 (b) School facilities shall include a sufficient number of kindergartens.

19 (c) On or before December 1, 2017, the department of elementary and secondary education
20 shall establish a policy that allows a school district to submit a detailed plan, at any time, to the
21 commissioner of elementary and secondary education that would allow the schools to conduct
22 instruction through virtual education when the schools have been closed due to inclement weather
23 or other emergency. The plan for virtual education would be subject to, and require approval by,
24 the council on elementary and secondary education in order to count as a school day.

25 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 provide that the school year for all public schools, including traditional
2 public and public charter schools, independent charter schools, and mayoral academies, would start
3 on the same date of each calendar year.

4 This act would take effect upon passage.

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