

2021 -- H 5367

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LC000585  
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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2021

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A N A C T

RELATING TO EDUCATION - THE EDUCATION EQUITY AND PROPERTY TAX RELIEF  
ACT

Introduced By: Representatives O'Brien, Corvese, McEntee, Craven, Costantino, and  
Noret

Date Introduced: February 05, 2021

Referred To: House Finance

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Section 16-7.2-6 of the General Laws in Chapter 16-7.2 entitled "The  
2 Education Equity and Property Tax Relief Act" is hereby amended to read as follows:

3 **16-7.2-6. Categorical programs, state funded expenses.**

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

6 (a) Excess costs associated with special education students. Excess costs are defined when  
7 an individual special education student's cost shall be deemed to be "extraordinary". Extraordinary  
8 costs are those educational costs that exceed the state-approved threshold based on an amount  
9 above five times the core foundation amount (total of core-instruction amount plus student success  
10 amount). The department of elementary and secondary education shall prorate the funds available  
11 for distribution among those eligible school districts if the total approved costs for which school  
12 districts are seeking reimbursement exceed the amount of funding appropriated in any fiscal year;  
13 and the department of elementary and secondary education shall also collect data on those  
14 educational costs that exceed the state-approved threshold based on an amount above two (2), three  
15 (3), and four (4) times the core-foundation amount;

16 (b) Career and technical education costs to help meet initial investment requirements  
17 needed to transform existing, or create new, comprehensive, career and technical education  
18 programs and career pathways in critical and emerging industries and to help offset the higher-

1 than-average costs associated with facilities, equipment maintenance and repair, and supplies  
2 necessary for maintaining the quality of highly specialized programs that are a priority for the state.  
3 The department shall develop criteria for the purpose of allocating any and all career and technical  
4 education funds as may be determined by the general assembly on an annual basis. The department  
5 of elementary and secondary education shall prorate the funds available for distribution among  
6 those eligible school districts if the total approved costs for which school districts are seeking  
7 reimbursement exceed the amount of funding available in any fiscal year;

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

11 (d) Central Falls, Davies, and the Met Center Stabilization Fund is established to ensure  
12 that appropriate funding is available to support their students. Additional support for Central Falls  
13 is needed due to concerns regarding the city's capacity to meet the local share of education costs.  
14 This fund requires that education aid calculated pursuant to § 16-7.2-3 and funding for costs outside  
15 the permanent foundation education-aid formula, including, but not limited to, transportation,  
16 facility maintenance, and retiree health benefits shall be shared between the state and the city of  
17 Central Falls. The fund shall be annually reviewed to determine the amount of the state and city  
18 appropriation. The state's share of this fund may be supported through a reallocation of current state  
19 appropriations to the Central Falls school district. At the end of the transition period defined in §  
20 16-7.2-7, the municipality will continue its contribution pursuant to § 16-7-24. Additional support  
21 for the Davies and the Met Center is needed due to the costs associated with running a stand-alone  
22 high school offering both academic and career and technical coursework. The department shall  
23 recommend criteria for the purpose of allocating any and all stabilization funds as may be  
24 determined by the general assembly;

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

32 (f) Excess costs associated with transporting students within regional school districts. This  
33 fund will provide direct state funding for the excess costs associated with transporting students  
34 within regional school districts, established pursuant to chapter 3 of this title. This fund requires

1 that the state and regional school district share equally the student transportation costs net any  
2 federal sources of revenue for these expenditures. The department of elementary and secondary  
3 education shall prorate the funds available for distribution among those eligible school districts if  
4 the total approved costs for which school districts are seeking reimbursement exceed the amount  
5 of funding available in any fiscal year;

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

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

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

16 (3) The regionalization bonus in the first fiscal year shall be two percent (2.0%) of the  
17 state's share of the foundation education aid for the regionalized district as calculated pursuant to  
18 §§ 16-7.2-3 and 16-7.2-4 in that fiscal year;

19 (4) The regionalization bonus in the second fiscal year shall be one percent (1.0%) of the  
20 state's share of the foundation education aid for the regionalized district as calculated pursuant to  
21 §§ 16-7.2-3 and 16-7.2-4 in that fiscal year;

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

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

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

29 (h) Additional state support for English learners (EL). The amount to support EL students  
30 shall be determined by multiplying an EL factor of ten percent (10%) by the core-instruction per-  
31 pupil amount defined in § 16-7.2-3(a)(1) and applying that amount of additional state support to  
32 EL students identified using widely adopted, independent standards and assessments identified by  
33 the commissioner. All categorical funds distributed pursuant to this subsection must be used to  
34 provide high-quality, research-based services to EL students and managed in accordance with

1 requirements set forth by the commissioner of elementary and secondary education. The  
2 department of elementary and secondary education shall collect performance reports from districts  
3 and approve the use of funds prior to expenditure. The department of elementary and secondary  
4 education shall ensure the funds are aligned to activities that are innovative and expansive and not  
5 utilized for activities the district is currently funding. The department of elementary and secondary  
6 education shall prorate the funds available for distribution among eligible recipients if the total  
7 calculated costs exceed the amount of funding available in any fiscal year;

8 (i) State support for school resource officers. The general assembly recognizes that the  
9 safety and security of all persons in public schools throughout the state are paramount in the overall  
10 scheme. The general assembly shall work together with the school districts to achieve such goal.

11 For purposes of this subsection, a school resource officer (SRO) shall be defined as a career law  
12 enforcement officer with sworn authority who is deployed by an employing police department or  
13 agency in a community-oriented policing assignment to work in collaboration with one or more  
14 schools. School resource officers should have completed at least forty (40) hours of specialized  
15 training in school policing, administered by an accredited agency, before being assigned. Beginning  
16 in FY 2019, ~~for a period of three (3) years,~~ school districts or municipalities that choose to employ  
17 new hires as school resource officers shall receive direct state support for costs associated with  
18 employing such officers at public middle and high schools. For purposes of this subsection, a "new  
19 hire" school resource officer shall be defined as a school resource officer who is hired after June  
20 30, 2020, and is not replacing a school resource officer who has since retired. Districts or  
21 municipalities shall be reimbursed an amount equal to one-half (1/2) of the cost of salaries and  
22 benefits for the qualifying positions. Funding will be provided for school resource officer positions  
23 established on or after July 1, 2018, provided that:

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

25 (i) Schools with enrollments below one thousand twelve hundred (1,200) students shall  
26 require one school resource officer;

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

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

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

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

1 SECTION 2. 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 - THE EDUCATION EQUITY AND PROPERTY TAX RELIEF  
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- 1           This act would extend the reimbursement to a school district or municipality for the
- 2           employment of newly hired school resource officers only.
- 3           This act would take effect upon passage.

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