

2024 -- S 2356

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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2024

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A N A C T

RELATING TO STATE AFFAIRS AND GOVERNMENT -- THE RHODE ISLAND
CLIMATE CHANGE AND OCEAN PROTECTION YOUTH EDUCATION AND
WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT ACT

Introduced By: Senators Lawson, Euer, Gu, Lauria, Britto, Pearson, DiMario, Valverde,
Miller, and Mack

Date Introduced: February 12, 2024

Referred To: Senate Finance

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Title 42 of the General Laws entitled "STATE AFFAIRS AND
2 GOVERNMENT" is hereby amended by adding thereto the following chapter:

3 CHAPTER 6.3

4 THE RHODE ISLAND CLIMATE CHANGE AND OCEAN PROTECTION YOUTH
5 EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT ACT

6 **42-6.3-1. Short title.**

7 This chapter shall be known and may be cited as the "The Rhode Island Climate Change
8 and Ocean Protection Youth Education and Workforce Development Act".

9 **42-6.3-2. Definitions.**

10 As used in this chapter:

11 (1) "Apprenticeship" means a proven model of job preparation that combines paid on-the-
12 job learning with related instruction to progressively increase workers' skill levels and wages. It is
13 an employer-driven model that provides an effective way for employers to recruit, train, and retain
14 highly skilled workers. As an earn and learn strategy, apprenticeship offers job seekers immediate
15 employment that offers advancement along a career path and a nationally recognized credential.

16 (2) "Blue economy" means an economy built on the sustainable use of ocean resources for
17 economic growth, improved livelihoods, and jobs while preserving the health of the ocean
18 ecosystem.

1 (3) "Climate change education" means nonformal and formal interdisciplinary learning at
2 all age levels about:

3 (i) Climate change, climate adaptation and mitigation, climate resilience, and climate
4 justice; and

5 (ii) The effects of climate change, climate adaptation and mitigation, climate resilience,
6 and climate justice on the environmental, energy, social, and economic systems of the United
7 States.

8 (4) "Climate justice" means the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people,
9 regardless of race, color, culture, national origin, or income, with respect to the development,
10 implementation, and enforcement of policies and projects to ensure that each person enjoys the
11 same degree of protection from the adverse effects of climate change.

12 (5) "Climate literacy" means competence or knowledge of climate change, its causes and
13 impacts, and the technical, scientific, economic, and social dynamics of promising solutions.

14 (6) "Communities of practice" means a network of practitioners bound by a shared interest
15 and purpose who develop relationships, share ideas, and build knowledge and skills through
16 repeated interactions to advance a domain of professional practice.

17 (7) "Environmental justice" means the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all
18 people, regardless of race, color, culture, national origin, or income, with respect to the
19 development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies to
20 ensure that each person enjoys:

21 (i) The same degree of protection from environmental and health hazards; and

22 (ii) Equal access to any state agency action on environmental justice issues in order to have
23 a healthy environment in which to live, learn, work, and recreate.

24 (8) "Environmental justice community" means a community with significant representation
25 of communities of color, low-income communities, or tribal and indigenous communities that
26 experiences, or is at risk of experiencing higher or more adverse human health or environmental
27 effects as compared to other communities.

28 (9) "Green economy" means an economy that results in improved human and economic
29 well-being and social equity by significantly reducing environmental risks and ecological
30 scarcities.

31 10) "Local educational agency" and "state educational agency" have the meanings given
32 those terms in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, 20 U.S.C. 7801.

33 (11) "Nonformal" means, with respect to learning, out-of-school educational programming
34 carried out by nonprofit organizations and public agencies.

1 (12) "Nonprofit organization" means an organization exempt from taxation pursuant to the
2 provisions of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, 26 U.S.C. § 501.

3 (13) "Ocean literacy" means competence or knowledge of the ocean, its interaction with
4 humans, and the technical, scientific, economic, and social dynamics of ocean protection.

5 (14) "Ocean protection education" means nonformal and formal interdisciplinary learning
6 at all age levels about:

7 (i) Ocean life, human interactions with the ocean, the ocean's physical geography, and
8 ocean-related environmental issues; and

9 (ii) The effects of ocean-related environmental issues on the environmental, energy, social,
10 and economic systems of the United States.

11 **42-6.3-3. Appropriations.**

12 (a) For the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2024, there is hereby appropriated, out of money
13 in the treasury not otherwise appropriated the sum of two hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$250,000)
14 to implement the grant program provided in § 42-6.3-4; and the state controller is hereby authorized
15 and directed to draw the controller's orders upon the general treasurer for payment of said sum, or
16 so much thereof as may be from time to time required, upon receipt by the general treasurer of
17 properly authenticated vouchers.

18 (b) For the fiscal year 2025-2026, and each fiscal year thereafter, the general assembly
19 shall annually appropriate a sum as it may deem necessary to carry out the purposes of this chapter,
20 and the state controller is hereby authorized and directed to draw the controller's orders upon the
21 general treasurer for the payment of the sum or sums or so much thereof as may be required from
22 time to time, upon receipt by the general treasurer of properly authenticated vouchers.

23 **42-6.3-4. Grant program.**

24 (a) There is hereby established a grant program to promote and enhance climate change
25 and ocean protection educational programs for youth pursuant to the provisions of this chapter. The
26 director of the department of labor and training, after consultation with the director of the
27 department of environmental management, shall disburse appropriated funds pursuant to § 42-6.3-
28 3 to eligible recipients using a competitive grant process, and establish standards and an application
29 process for the grants, in order to:

30 (1) Increase capacity at established organizations running climate change and/or ocean
31 protection education programs that will enhance the climate and ocean literacy of Rhode Island
32 youth and workforce by broadening the understanding of climate change and ocean protection,
33 including possible long-term and short-term consequences, disproportionate impacts of those
34 consequences, and potential solutions;

1 (2) Apply the latest scientific and technological discoveries to provide formal and
2 nonformal learning opportunities to youth, including those of diverse cultural and linguistic
3 backgrounds; and

4 (3) Emphasize actionable information and transferrable skills to help young people
5 understand and engage new technologies, programs, and incentives related to climate change,
6 climate adaptation and mitigation, climate resilience, climate justice, environmental justice, and
7 ocean protection.

8 (b) Eligible recipients shall include:

9 (1) State educational agencies, in collaboration with local educational agencies and local
10 nonprofit organizations, for the implementation of climate and ocean literacy plans for formal and
11 nonformal climate change and ocean protection education for people ages five (5) through eighteen
12 (18) that:

13 (i) Are aligned with state education standards;

14 (ii) Include relevant teacher training and professional development; and

15 (iii) Include at least one of the following:

16 (A) Integration of key climate change and ocean protection concepts into state education
17 standards for science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), civics and social studies,
18 and other relevant subject areas during the next revision of such standards.

19 (B) Development of climate change and ocean protection education frameworks and model
20 curricula and curation and dissemination of existing climate change and ocean protection
21 curriculum materials.

22 (C) Creation of applied learning project-based models, such as models making optimum
23 use of green features improvements to school facilities, such as energy systems, lighting systems,
24 water management, waste management, and school grounds improvements.

25 (D) Incorporation of climate change mitigation and blue and green economy technologies
26 into new and existing career and technical education career tracks and work-based learning
27 experiences, including development of partnerships with labor organizations, trade organizations,
28 and apprenticeship programs.

29 (2) Youth development and nonprofit organization programs that engage in community-
30 based climate mitigation and adaptation and ocean protection work that includes a substantive
31 academic enrichment component for youth ages five (5) through eighteen (18).

32 (3) State-recognized tribal programs that engage in community-based climate mitigation
33 and adaptation and ocean protection work that includes a substantive academic enrichment
34 component for youth ages five (5) through eighteen (18).

1 **42-6.3-5. Department of labor and training - Administration of program.**

2 (a) The director of the department of labor and training, after consultation with the
3 department of environmental management, shall administer the grant program established pursuant
4 to § 42-6.3-4 using a competitive grant process, and establish standards and an application process
5 for the grants.

6 (b) The director of the department of labor and training shall annually consult with other
7 relevant agencies of state and municipal government, nonprofit organizations, and community-
8 based organizations to determine ways in which grant making pursuant to the provisions of this
9 chapter may enhance and support climate change and ocean protection education, workforce
10 development and training, and environmental justice goals.

11 (c) The director of the department of labor and training shall direct at least forty percent
12 (40%) percent of all funds appropriated for grants to serve environmental justice communities.

13 (d) The director of the department of labor and training, with the assistance of the office of
14 post-secondary education, shall establish communities of practice with respect to each of the factors
15 set forth herein.

16 **42-6.3-6. Rules and regulation.**

17 The director of the department of labor and training shall promulgate rules and regulations
18 to implement the provisions of this chapter.

19 **42-6.3-7. Reports.**

20 The director of the department of labor and training shall report annually to the general
21 assembly and the governor no later than December 31 of each year on the status and progress of
22 the program established and administered pursuant to the provisions of this chapter.

23 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 STATE AFFAIRS AND GOVERNMENT -- THE RHODE ISLAND
CLIMATE CHANGE AND OCEAN PROTECTION YOUTH EDUCATION AND
WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT ACT

1 This act would establish the Rhode Island Climate Change and Ocean Protection Youth
2 Education and Workforce Development Act. For the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2024, there would
3 be appropriated two hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$250,000) to implement a grant program
4 administered by the department of labor and training to promote climate change and ocean
5 protection educational opportunities for youth ages five (5) through eighteen (18). Additional
6 annual appropriations would be authorized by the general assembly.

7 This act would take effect upon passage.

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