

2020 -- S 2626

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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2020

SENATE RESOLUTION

RESPECTFULLY REQUESTING THAT THE RHODE ISLAND DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION DEVELOP A SET OF KEY ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE
PRINCIPLES AND CONCEPTS TO BE INFUSED IN ALL SUBJECTS FOR K-12 PUBLIC
SCHOOL STUDENTS

Introduced By: Senators Lawson, Euer, Sosnowski, Valverde, and Lynch Prata

Date Introduced: February 27, 2020

Referred To: Senate Education

1 WHEREAS, The evidence for human-induced climate change is overwhelming and
2 undeniable; and

3 WHEREAS, The heaviest burden of climate change will fall on the next generation; and

4 WHEREAS, Nearly 10,000 students graduate from Rhode Island high schools each year,
5 armed with attitudes, skills, and knowledge about the climate that inform their actions; and

6 WHEREAS, The effects on the climate, positive or negative, of each of those 10,000
7 students lasts beyond a lifetime; and

8 WHEREAS, Students need to be prepared to implement changes in professional and
9 personal practices, to support and help develop new technology and policy, and to address the
10 coming social and economic challenges and opportunities arising from a changing climate; and

11 WHEREAS, It is thus essential that each of these graduates are climate literate; and

12 WHEREAS, According to the Yale Program on Climate Change Communications, over
13 76 percent of the people in Rhode Island support teaching students about the causes,
14 consequences, and potential solutions to climate change; and

15 WHEREAS, According to the National Center for Science Education, 86 percent of
16 teachers in the United States feel that climate change should be taught in schools; and

17 WHEREAS, Only thirty percent of middle school and forty-five percent of high school
18 science teachers nationally, understand the extent of the scientific consensus on climate change;

1 and

2 WHEREAS, The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), signed into law in 2015, names
3 environmental education as part of a well-rounded education, and allows federal funding from
4 ESSA to be used to introduce or expand environmental education in school districts; and

5 WHEREAS, The National Science Teaching Association, the National Association of
6 Geoscience Teachers, the National Association of Biology Teachers, and other professional
7 organizations have called for greater support for science educators in teaching climate science
8 and climate change; and

9 WHEREAS, The Resilient Rhody Report recommends that K-12 Education be expanded
10 to include education on environmental literacy, including climate-related emergency
11 preparedness, by developing resources for school use and identifying how these concepts can be
12 incorporated into existing state standards; and

13 WHEREAS, The students in Rhode Island have requested that climate change education
14 be included in the curriculum; and

15 WHEREAS, The impact of climate change and the urgency and magnitude of the
16 challenge of addressing climate change will soon fall on current students; now, therefore be it

17 RESOLVED, That this Senate of the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations
18 hereby requests that the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE), in consultation with a
19 wide representation from the environmental and climate education community, develop a set of
20 key environmental and climate principles and concepts which should be infused into all subjects
21 throughout K-12, develop learning standards for the same, and ensure that all teacher professional
22 development includes these principles and concepts; and be it further

23 RESOLVED, That this Senate hereby urges all elementary and secondary public schools
24 including middle schools, or any other schools managed and controlled by the state, to offer as
25 part of the curriculum, courses in climate and environmental literacy; and be it further

26 RESOLVED, That this Senate hereby urges the Rhode Island Department of Education to
27 ensure that teacher professional development in Rhode Island in the Common Core State
28 Standards and in the Next Generation Science Standards use climate as an exemplary anchor
29 phenomenon; and be it further

30 RESOLVED, That this Senate respectfully urges the Rhode Island Department of
31 Education to make available on its website, curriculum materials and such other materials as may
32 assist local and regional school committees in developing instructional programs in climate and
33 environmental literacy. RIDE shall consult with practicing teachers, principals, superintendents
34 and experts when making such curriculum and other materials available. The curriculum and

1 materials selected shall be aligned with state standards and assessments and contain sufficient
2 detail to guide teachers in planning lessons aligned with state standards and assessments; and be it
3 further

4 RESOLVED, That the Secretary of State be and hereby is authorized and directed to
5 transmit a duly certified copy of this resolution to Ms. Barbara S. Cottam, Chair, Rhode Island
6 Board of Education.

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