

April 12, 2019

Legislative Press Bureau at (401) 528-1743

THIS WEEK AT THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

STATE HOUSE — Here are the highlights from news and events that took place in the General Assembly this week. For more information on any of these items visit <http://www.rilegislature.gov/pressrelease>



- **Senate OKs bill for pilot program using Medicaid to house chronically homeless**
The Senate passed legislation ([2019-S 0024](#)) sponsored by Senate Health and Human Services Committee Chairman Joshua Miller (D-Dist. 28, Cranston, Providence) to launch a pilot program testing the effectiveness of using Medicaid waiver funds to treat chronic homelessness. The chronically homeless have high rates of emergency room use, and housing has been shown to drastically reduce their medical costs. Rep. David A. Bennett (D-Dist. 20, Warwick, Cranston) is sponsoring companion legislation ([2019-H 5571](#)) in the House.
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Senate approves bill requiring disclosure of presidential candidates' tax returns**
The Senate approved legislation ([2019-S 0342](#)) sponsored by Sen. Gayle L. Goldin (D-Dist. 3, Providence) requiring presidential candidates to release their personal tax returns in order to be listed on the Rhode Island ballot. Rep. Teresa A. Tanzi (D-Dist. 34, South Kingstown, Narragansett) has introduced companion legislation ([2019-H 5727](#)) in the House.
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **House passes Vella-Wilkinson bill to make gay discharges honorable**
The House of Representatives has passed legislation ([2019-H 5443A](#)) introduced by Rep. Camille F.J. Vella-Wilkinson (D-Dist. 21, Warwick) that would provide a petition process to have a discharge from service recorded as honorable for members of the armed services separated from the service with a general or other than honorable discharge due solely to their sexual orientation, or gender identity or

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expression. The measure now moves to the Senate for consideration.

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▪ **Senate OKs Ciccone’s Healthy Workplace Act that combats workplace bullying**

The Senate passed legislation ([2019-S 0090](#)) introduced by Sen. Frank A. Ciccone (D-Dist. 7, Providence, North Providence) that would establish a cause of action against employers and employees for workplace bullying, harassment and other abusive behavior that may not fall into other categories that are already protected such as race, sex or sexual orientation. The purpose of the legislation is to provide legal relief for employees who have been harmed psychologically, physically or economically by deliberate exposure to abusive work environments.

[Click here to see news release.](#)

▪ **House passes Williams bill to exempt natural hair braiders from licensing**

The House of Representatives passed legislation ([2019-H 5677](#)) introduced by Rep. Anastasia P. Williams (D-Dist. 9, Providence) that would exempt natural hair braiders from the state’s requirement for hairdressers and cosmeticians to be licensed with the state. Natural hair braiding is a service of twisting, wrapping, weaving, extending, locking, or braiding hair by hand. The measure now moves to the Senate for consideration.

[Click here to see news release.](#)

▪ **Senate OKs Cano bill that requires employee sexual harassment training**

The Senate passed legislation ([2019-S 0330](#)) introduced by Sen. Sandra Cano (D-Dist. 8, Pawtucket) that adds several workplace protections for employees to state law. The bill would require employers of four or more employees to comply with sexual harassment education and workplace training requirements. It would also extend workplace protections to domestic service employees and include retaliation as an unlawful employment practice. The measure now moves to the House of Representatives for consideration.

[Click here to see news release.](#)

▪ **Senate OKs Lynch Prata bill to ban car insurers from considering credit history**

The Senate approved legislation ([2019-S 0257](#)) introduced by Sen. Erin Lynch Prata (D-Dist. 31, Warwick, Cranston) that would prevent consideration of an applicant’s credit history when determining automobile insurance rates. The legislation states that only past claim experience and “merit rating” or “experience rating” can be used in determining automobile insurance rates. The measure now moves to the House of Representatives, where similar legislation ([2019-H 5472](#)) has been introduced by Rep. James B. Jackson (D-Dist. 26, West Warwick, Coventry Warwick).

[Click here to see news release.](#)

▪ **President Ruggiero bill would streamline development of state lands**

Senate President Dominick J. Ruggiero (D-Dist. 4, North Providence, Providence) submitted legislation ([2019-S 0803](#)) that takes a new approach to economic development on large tracts of state land. The legislation establishes a process for creating Special Economic Development Districts on state-owned tracts of 20 or more

contiguous acres. These special districts would be vested with the authority to adopt development plans that include land use, location of buildings, street systems, dimension and height requirements, parking, landscaping, design review and population density.

[Click here to see news release.](#)

- **Sen. Metts, Rep. Slater joined by advocates calling for licensing reform**
Sen. Harold M. Metts (D-Dist. 6, Providence) and Rep. Scott A. Slater (D-Dist. 10, Providence) have filed the “Fair Chance Licensing” act ([2019-S 0610](#), [2019-H 5863](#)) to prevent Rhode Islanders from being denied an occupational license based solely or partially on a non-related criminal conviction. Advocates at a State House event discussed how such restrictions impede formerly incarcerated individuals from finding employment for the rest of their lives.
[Click here to see news release.](#)

- **President Ruggerio introduces pair of bills to address opioid overdose epidemic**
President of the Senate Dominick J. Ruggerio introduced two pieces of legislation to address the opioid overdose epidemic in Rhode Island. The Opioid Stewardship Act ([2019-S 0798](#)) would establish a restricted receipt account to fund opioid treatment, recovery, prevention and education services administered through several state departments. The second bill ([2019-S 0799](#)) would address a situation experienced by some individuals who obtained naloxone, then had trouble getting life insurance. Rhode Island has an “open prescription” for naloxone, meaning any person can obtain the medication at a pharmacy.
[Click here to see news release.](#)