

May 17, 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 backs bill to enact much of ACA at state level**

The Senate approved legislation sponsored by Sen. Joshua Miller (D-Dist. 28, Cranston, Providence) to help protect Rhode Islanders' access to insurance coverage in the face of threats to the federal Affordable Care Act. The bill ([2019-S 0738A](#)), which enshrines, among other things, protections for people with pre-existing conditions and coverage for dependents up to age 26, is also designed to provide predictability to insurers, stabilizing the Rhode Island insurance market regardless of the future of the federal law. The bill will now go to the House of Representatives, where House Health, Education and Welfare Committee Chairman Joseph M. McNamara (D-Dist. 19, Warwick, Cranston) is sponsoring companion legislation ([2019-H 5916](#)).

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

- **Speaker's Good Samaritan overdose bill passes House**

The House approved legislation sponsored by House Speaker Nicholas A. Mattiello (D-Dist. 15, Cranston) to help prevent overdose deaths by better protecting law enforcement and emergency medical personnel who try to save victims. The bill ([2019-H 5536](#)), which now goes to the Senate, would add law enforcement and emergency medical personnel to the Good Samaritan Overdose Prevention Act, which protects them from civil or criminal liability arising from helping a person they believe is overdosing.

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

- **Senate OKs bill to avoid construction delays through third-party inspections**

The Senate passed legislation sponsored by Senate President Dominick Ruggerio (D-

More...

Dist. 4, North Providence, Providence) enabling contractors or builders to hire a third-party inspector or use a state inspector if a municipal building official fails to perform required inspections within 48 hours. The bill ([2019-S 0687A](#)), which is part of the Senate's "Building A More Vibrant Rhode Island" package of economic development legislation, is meant to ensure developers can get their projects inspected in a timely manner. Rep. Stephen R. Ucci (D-Dist. 42, Johnston, Cranston) is sponsoring the bill ([2019-H 5989](#)) in the House.

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

▪ **Senate approves Conley bill creating Small Business Development Fund**

The Senate passed legislation introduced by Sen. William J. Conley Jr. (D-Dist. 18, East Providence, Pawtucket) that would create the Rhode Island Small Business Development Fund. The bill ([2019-S 0055](#)) would establish a fund designed to encourage the formation of private capital investment in small business by federally licensed investment companies. The measure now heads to the House of Representatives where similar legislation ([2019-H 5216](#)) has been introduced by Rep. Joseph J. Solomon Jr. (D-Dist. 22, Warwick).

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

▪ **House OKs Ackerman bill to protect consumers' right to pay in cash**

The House of Representatives passed legislation introduced by Rep. Mia Ackerman (D-Dist. 45, Cumberland, Lincoln) that would protect the rights of customers to pay for things in cash. The bill ([2019-H 5116A](#)) would make it unlawful for any retail establishment offering goods or services for sale to discriminate against a prospective customer by requiring the use of credit for purchase of goods or services. The measure now moves to the Senate for consideration.

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

▪ **Senate approves bonds for Route 95 viaduct in Providence**

The Senate approved up to \$200 million in GARVEE bonds that will allow Rhode Island to take advantage of current low interest rates to fund the reconstruction of the viaduct that carries Route 95 north through downtown Providence. Replacement of the southbound bridge was completed in 2017, but the northbound side remains structurally deficient and in need of widening and better traffic control. The bill ([2019-S 0633A](#)), sponsored by Sen. Majority Whip Maryellen Goodwin (D-Dist. 1, Providence) will now proceed to the House of Representatives, where House Majority Whip John G. Edwards (D-Dist. 70, Tiverton, Portsmouth) is sponsoring similar legislation ([2019-H 5883](#)).

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

▪ **'Building a More Vibrant Rhode Island' bills pass Senate**

The Senate approved three bills that are part of the Rhode Island Senate's "Building a More Vibrant Rhode Island" economic development package. The bills ([2019-S 0713A](#), [2019-S 0726A](#), [2019-S 0714A](#)), which relate to expanding apprenticeship opportunities, were sponsored by Sen. Frank A. Ciccone (D-Dist. 7, Providence, North Providence), Sen. Sandra Cano (D-Dist. 8, Pawtucket) and Sen. Cynthia A. Coyne (D-Dist. 32, Barrington, Bristol, East Providence).

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

- **Committee hears Euer bill to protect student borrowers**

The Senate Finance Committee this week took testimony on legislation sponsored by Sen. Dawn Euer (D-Dist. 13, Newport, Jamestown) to protect student loan borrowers and establish oversight of student loan servicers operating in Rhode Island. The Student Loan Bill of Rights ([2019-S 0737](#)), filed in response to poor lending practices reported by borrowers, sets standards for student loan servicing, prohibiting predatory behavior and providing best practices for protecting consumers' rights. House Health, Education and Welfare Chairman Joseph M. McNamara (D-Dist. 19, Cranston, Warwick) has introduced the legislation ([2019-H 5936](#)) in the House. [Click here to see news release.](#)

- **House Oversight hears about DCYF compliance with Extension of Care Act**

The House Oversight Committee, chaired by Rep. Patricia Serpa (D-Dist. 27, West Warwick, Coventry, Warwick), heard a report from the Child Advocate and representatives of the Department of Children, Youth and Families regarding the agency's implementation of the Voluntary Extension of Care Program, which allows young people to access care and support through DCYF up to age 21. Providing an opportunity to continue care up to age 21 tends to build stronger transition plans and help young people in DCYF care access the job training and education they need to get and keep a job. [Click here to see news release.](#)

-30-

For an electronic version of this and all press releases published by the Legislative Press and Public Information Bureau, please visit our website at www.rilegislature.gov/pressrelease.