

April 5, 2024

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>



- **House OKs McNamara bill to re-establish academy to assist parenting teens**
The House of Representatives has approved legislation ([2024-H 7560](#)) introduced by Rep. Joseph M. McNamara (D-Dist. 19, Warwick, Cranston) that would re-establish the Sheila C. “Skip” Nowell Academy, an institution that focuses on the diverse needs of pregnant and parenting teens, as a state school. The measure now moves to the Senate, where similar legislation ([2024-S 2807](#)) has been introduced by Sen. Sandra Cano (D-Dist. 8, Pawtucket).
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Senate OKs Lauria bill to include climate change in economic planning**
The Senate approved legislation ([2024-S 2043A](#)) sponsored by Sen. Pamela J. Lauria (D-Dist. 32, Barrington, Bristol, East Providence) to help ensure that climate change, rising seas and coastal resiliency are considered as the state makes its economic development plans. The measure now moves to the House, where similar legislation ([2024-H 7246](#)) has been introduced by Rep. Jennifer Smith Boylan (D-Dist. 66, Barrington, East Providence).
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **House OKs bill to ensure dense breast notifications following mammograms**
The House of Representatives approved legislation ([2024-H 7734A](#)) sponsored by Rep. Rebecca Kislak (D-Dist. 4, Providence) to ensure that women with dense breast tissue receive the most up-to-date notification following their mammograms. The bill now goes to the Senate, where Sen. Bridget Valverde (D-Dist. 35, North Kingstown, East Greenwich, South Kingstown) is sponsoring companion legislation ([2024-S](#)

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- **House OKs Shanley bill allowing DEM to drain overflowing septic systems**
The House of Representatives has passed legislation ([2024-H 7654A](#)) introduced by Rep. Evan P. Shanley (D-Dist. 24, Warwick, East Greenwich) that would give the Department of Environmental Management the power to drain, remove or replace private septic systems that are in a state of overflow, then bill the owner for the service. The measure now moves to the Senate, where Sen. Matthew L. LaMountain (D-Dist. 31, Warwick, Cranston) plans to introduce companion legislation.
- **House OKs bill prohibiting auto insurers from charging higher rates to widowed**
The House approved legislation sponsored by Rep. Arthur Handy (D-Dist. 18, Cranston) to prohibit auto insurers from charging policyholders more solely because they have been widowed. The legislation ([2024-H 7606](#)) prohibits auto insurers from treating widows or widowers any differently than married people in terms of classification or rates, beginning with policies issued after Jan. 1, 2025. The bill now goes to the Senate, where Senate Majority Whip Valarie Lawson (D-Dist. 14, East Providence) introduced the legislation ([2024-S 2269](#)).
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- **Gu, Cortvriend bill would replace CRMC with Dept. of Coastal Resources**
Legislation ([2024-S 2928A](#), [2024-H 7844](#)) sponsored by Sen. Victoria Gu (D-Dist. 38, Westerly, Charlestown, South Kingstown) and Rep. Terri Cortvriend (D-Dist. 72, Portsmouth, Middletown) and championed by Attorney General Peter Neronha would replace the Coastal Resources Management Council with a new Department of Coastal Resources under the executive branch..
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- **Ujifusa, Tanzi bills would aid those with mental health, substance use disorders**
Sen. Linda Ujifusa (D-Dist. 11, Portsmouth, Bristol) and Rep. Teresa Tanzi (D-Dist. 34, South Kingstown, Narragansett) have introduced a bill ([2024-S 2612](#), [2024-H 7876](#)) that would specify coverage standards for mental health and substance abuse use disorders to ensure insurers cover mental health care at an equivalent level to physical health care, and another ([2024-S 2393](#), [2024-H 7624](#)) that would prevent insurers from requiring that patients obtain prior authorization before seeking in-network mental health or substance use disorder health care.
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Sen. Euer, Rep. Felix bill would extend minimum wage to domestic workers**
The House Labor Committee heard testimony on legislation ([2024-S 2021](#), [2024-H 7532](#)) sponsored by Senate Judiciary Committee Chairwoman Dawn Euer (D-District 13, Newport, Jamestown) and Rep. Leonela Felix (D-Dist. 61, Pawtucket) that would remove the exemption for domestic workers in state minimum wage law. Currently Rhode Island domestic workers are only guaranteed the federal minimum wage of \$7.25 per hour.
- **Rep. Felix introduces slate of criminal justice reform bills**

Rep. Leonela Felix (D-Dist. 61, Pawtucket) has introduced a slate of criminal justice reform bills to make it easier for those released from prison to reintegrate into their community by addressing issues including solitary confinement, the sealing of dismissed charges, free phone calls for inmates and the elimination of cash bail for misdemeanor charges.

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▪ **Small Business Committee hears from businesses affected by bridge closure**

The House Small Business Committee heard from small businesses that have been negatively impacted by the closure of the westbound portion of the Washington Bridge. The committee is chaired by Rep. Carol Hagan McEntee (D-Dist. 33, South Kingstown, Narragansett). House Majority Whip Katherine S. Kazarian (D-Dist. 63, East Providence, Pawtucket) worked with Chairwoman McEntee and the other East Bay legislators to set up the meeting.

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