**Last Week At the State House**

S.2121, the Temporary Caregiver bill, passed the Senate Floor 31- 3. Minority Leader Jessica de la Cruz, Senator Anthony DeLuca and Senator Thomas Paolino voted against the bill. Absent from the vote were: Senator Elaine Morgan, Senator Louis Raptakis and Senator Gordon Roberts. The bill is now on its way to the House Labor Committee. While the bill passed the Senate, we ask you to continue to contact your Senator as bills will be negotiated over the upcoming months. S.2121 (and its companion bill H.7171) double the amount of time workers can use for Temporary Caregiver Insurance (from 6 weeks to 12 weeks) and expand the program to allow employees to take time to care for ***“a person for whom the employee is responsible for providing or arranging health or safety related care, including, but not limited to, helping the person obtain diagnostic, preventive, routine, or therapeutic health treatment.”***

**This Week At the State House**

Tuesday, April 2nd

H.7286, An Act Relating to Public Utilities and Carries, is the topic of discussion in the House Corporations Committee at the Rise (approximately 4:30pm) in the House Lounge. This bill creates a tiered rate system for electricity and natural gas customers whose household income level is below 150% of the federal poverty level and who are eligible for LIHEAP assistance or Medicaid. For these households, the plan envisions capping electric rates to ensure that they pay no more than 3% of their income on electricity or 6% of their income if the house utilizes electricity as a sole source of heat. The program will be funded by increased rates assessed on all other customers. The most current US Census estimates 10.8% of population in Rhode Island meets the definition of living in poverty. The census does not say how many are living at 150% of the federal poverty level. The Rhode Island total population at the time of the census was 1,095,962. Testimony may be submitted at HouseCorporations@rilegislature.gov

Wednesday, April 3rd

The House Committee on Small Business will be taking testimony from the public, but with a special request to hear from businesses affected by the Washington Bridge partial closure and replacement plan. The committee is gathering information to determine what assistance might be needed as the bridge is dismantled and rebuilt over the next year and a half. The meeting will be held in room 101 at 4:00pm sharp. If you wish to submit written testimony, email your letter to HouseSmallBusiness@rilegislature.gov

The Senate Education Committee is scheduled to hear S.2282, An Act Relating to Education – Curriculum at 4:00 in room 313. This act would establish a "workplace readiness week". It would require all public high schools, including charter schools, to annually observe that week by providing information to students on their rights as workers, including: (1) Prohibitions against misclassification of employees as independent contractors; (2) Child labor; (3) Wage and hour protections; (4) Worker safety; (5) Workers’ compensation; (6) Unemployment insurance; (7) Paid sick leave, paid family leave, and state disability insurance; (8) The right to organize a union in the workplace; and (9) Prohibitions against retaliation by employers when workers exercise these or any other rights guaranteed by law. Testimony can be submitted to SLegislation@rilegislature.gov

Senate Labor is scheduled to hear a couple bills of note at 4:00pm in room 212.

S.2122, An Act Relating to Corporations – Workers’ Cooperatives, provides exclusive benefits to cooperatives. Established in 2017, the General Assembly passed a law allowing the creation of an entity where individuals could complete a probationary period as a part-time or full-time employee and become a voting member of the company. The entity is taxed as a corporation. The law also states, “To the extent that a workers’ cooperative has shareholders (owners) who are employees (members), the workers’ cooperative shall be subject to the provisions of title 28 related to employees including, but not limited to: department of labor and training payroll taxes, temporary disability insurance, state unemployment insurance and workers’ compensation insurance.” S.2122 adds a new operational model for cooperatives. It allows co-ops to adopt, in its bylaws, the ability to furnish skilled labor from its members to other entities and to treat those members as independent contractors for that purpose – not as an employee of the co-op. This would allow a co-op to compete with similar businesses at a fiscal advantage.

S.2900, An Act Relating to Labor and Labor Relations – Fair Employment Practices – Extreme Temperature Employee Protection, requires employers to take special precautions when employees are working in temperatures above 90 degrees or below 32 degrees, including employees that are required to stay in vehicles under these conditions. Employees would be entitled to paid rest breaks, adequate shade, warming or cooling stations, drinking water, protective equipment and clothing. An employer found in noncompliance would be subject to compensatory damages and in some cases punitive damages.

Testimony on either of these bills can be emailed to SLegislation@rilegislature.gov

The following new bills have been filed:

House Bill No. [8109](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText24/HouseText24/H8109.pdf) Slater, DeSimone, Perez, Batista, Diaz**,**AN ACT RELATING TO TAXATION -- STATEWIDE TANGIBLE PROPERTY TAX EXEMPTION (Repeals the language that eff. 2025 fiscal year all cities/towns/fire districts would receive a reimbursement equal to the tangible property levy for the 12/31/22 assessment date less the tangible personal property levy for 12/31/25 assessment date.)

<http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText24/HouseText24/H8109.pdf>

Senate Bill No. [2929](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText24/SenateText24/S2929.pdf) (General Treasurer) Murray, Lawson, Acosta, Zurier, DiPalma, DiMario, Valverde, Cano, Lauria, Euer**,**AN ACT RELATING TO PUBLIC FINANCE -- RHODE ISLAND BABY BOND TRUST (Creates the Rhode Island baby bond trust to provide investment funds to children born to families with public health insurance or no insurance living in Rhode Island.)

<http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText24/SenateText24/S2929.pdf>

Senate Bill No. [2930](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText24/SenateText24/S2930.pdf) (General Treasurer) Zurier, Gu, DiPalma, Sosnowski, LaMountain, Lauria, DiMario**,**AN ACT RELATING TO TAXATION -- PERSONAL INCOME TAX (Provides a tax credit to individual taxpayers who convert their gas-powered vehicle into a vehicle propelled by an alternative fuel source.)

<http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText24/SenateText24/S2930.pdf>