**This Week at the State House**

This week was originally set as the deadline to file bills in the House. However, the deadline has been extended to March 1st. Both the House and Senate will be on break next week. Once the legislature returns on February 28th, expect hearing schedules to intensify through April.

On **Tuesday, at the Rise (approximately 4:30 p.m.) the House Finance Committee** will take testimony on the section of **Article 8** that pertains to the Small Business Development Fund. The Governor’s budget retains the enacted level of $700,000 from general revenues to recapitalize the Small Business Assistance Program for businesses with less than 200 employees that are having difficulties obtaining financing from traditional lending organizations. The program has $2.1 million in loanable funds as of December 2021 according to fiscal reports. The maximum amount that any one business can obtain from the fund is $750,000. The program provides a set aside provision for between 10% and 25% of the funding for a microloan program to be administered by a third-party with expertise in microloans. The Governor also proposes extending the sunset one year to December 31, 2023. The Committee will also take testimony on **Article 9** (excluding the broadband policy initiatives). Article 9 raises the Rebuild Rhode Island aggregate tax credit cap from $210 million to $225 million and extends the program’s sunset clause to December 31, 2023. The Article also extends the sunset for the following programs to December 31, 2023: Tax Increment Financing, Tax Stabilization Incentive, First Wave Closing Fund, I-195 Redevelopment Fund, Small Business Assistance Program, Main Street Streetscape Improvement Program, Innovation Initiative, High School, College, and Employer Partnerships, Air Service Development, Industry Cluster Grant Program, and the Qualified Jobs Tax Credit. The RI Wavemaker Fellowship program is altered to create a separate fund from healthcare professionals. Currently, this program is dedicated to science, technology, engineering and medicine (STEM) students. According to the House Fiscal Staff analysis, the budget includes $1.6 million from general revenues for FY2023 for the existing program and $.8 million for the healthcare fund.

Written testimony can be emailed to House Finance@rilegislature.gov Please include your name, Article number, position at the top of the email. The deadline for submission is Tuesday, at 1:00 p.m. You may also testify in person in Room 35 of the State House.

The **Senate Finance Committee** will also take testimony on **Article 9 Wednesday, at 5:00 p.m.** All public testimony for the Senate hearing will be virtual. Written testimony can be submitted to the committee by emailing it to: jplume@rilegislature.gov You may also request to testify verbally via telephone by going to the following link <https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=LBHmn1akN0aJ3A8oTO_8ZrrkHo3ATJRAp4ByeeV8cWRUOTNJUUdXNTlMVlYzVDdaUUFFRzZZREhKWS4u>

***Requests to testify verbally must be submitted by 4:00 p.m. Tuesday.***

**What’s in the Governor’s Budget**

**Article 10 – Education**. Article 10 ensures that local school aid will remain level-funded, and not be subject to attendance swings associated with the Covid-19 pandemic.

**Article 12 – Medical Assistance**. This Article requires personal care attendants, “high-risk providers and Medicaid providers to undergo national criminal records check prior to work. Rhode Island is one of five states that is not fingerprinting and conducting background checks for high- risk providers, as required under federal law. For Medicaid providers, this evaluation is also intended to uncover previous cases of fraud, waste or abuse of the Medicaid/CHIP Program. Disqualifying crimes include crimes from murder to sexual assault, assault on a person 60 years or older, burglary, embezzlement, abuse, neglect or exploitation of adults with severe impairments and exploitation of elders. It includes pleas of nolo contendere. Personal care aides must complete the background check prior to, or within one week of employment. The same disqualifying crimes apply to this group.

This Article also increases, by 3%, the Medicare and Medicaid rate reimbursement to nursing facilities. This change is reported to cost $3.8 million in general revenue.

The last change comes in the Rite Start and Rite Tract programs. The following explanation comes from the House Fiscal report*. “The section authorizes the Executive Office to apply for federal approval to use Medicaid funds to cover benefits to resident children whose family income is at or below 250 percent of poverty, regardless of immigration status. If federal funds are not allowable, the program will be funded entirely from general revenues. The budget adds $1.3 million from general revenues assuming an October 1, 2022 start date. The underlying assumptions are that nearly 1,500 children will eventually enroll with about 400 in the first year and full enrollment would cost approximately $7 million annually. The budget also includes $0.7 million from general revenues to make the system changes necessary to implement the program. Under current law, the state offers a limited Medicaid benefit to post-partum women up to 250 percent of poverty for up to 24 months. The program is for individuals who lose their Medicaid coverage after 60 days post-partum if they are not eligible for Medicaid under another eligibility category. For women who do not have qualified immigrant status for Medicaid, but whose birth was paid for by Medicaid because the child is covered, can receive state-only extended family planning benefits for 12 months. This section would expand coverage to both groups. Coverage for the first group, which totals $3.2 million, including $1.4 million from general revenues, is a new state Medicaid option created by the American Rescue Plan Act for women who currently lose Medicaid coverage after 60 days post-partum and will extend the full Medicaid benefit to approximately 1,000 women. The second is for women who do not qualify for Medicaid because of immigration status, but whose birth was paid for by Medicaid because the child is covered. The budget adds $2.0 million, entirely from general revenues, to provide full coverage to about 500 women. The budget also adds $1.4 million, including $0.8 million from general revenues, to make the necessary system changes.”*

**Article 13 – Human Services**. Article 13 expands eligibility for cash assistance. When calculating benefit today, the combined value of available resources (minus debts) cannot exceed $1000. This Article proposes to increase the threshold to $5000. In determining benefit amounts today, the Department excludes the first $100 per month of income and 50% of income over $170 per month. Article 13 proposes to exclude the first $300 of income per month and 50% of additional income over $300.The Governor estimated this cost to be $250,000 to be paid with federal dollars. This Article also expands child care assistance to working families with income less than 200% of the poverty level (currently 180%); and provide child care assistance to families with less than 200% of poverty level that are attending a RI public institution of higher learning. The Governor included $4.7 million in ARPA funds for these childcare expansion programs.

The following new bills have been filed:

Senate Bill No. [2168](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText22/SenateText22/S2168.pdf) Zurier, Valverde, Euer, Sosnowski**,**AN ACT RELATING TO HEALTH AND SAFETY -- AIR POLLUTION (Prohibits the sale of gasoline-powered leaf blowers in this state after July 1, 2023 and prohibit their use in this state after July 1, 2024. Violations would be punished by a civil fine not to exceed five hundred dollars ($500).)

<http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText22/SenateText22/S2168.pdf>

Senate Bill No. [2184](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText22/SenateText22/S2184.pdf) Calkin, Mendes, Mack, Acosta, Anderson**,**AN ACT RELATING TO TAXATION (Establishes a surtax on the business corporation tax for publicly traded corporations subject to SEC disclosure and reporting requirements, if corporation's ratio of compensation for its CEO to median worker is equal to or greater than 100 to 1.)

<http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText22/SenateText22/S2184.pdf>

Senate Bill No. [2189](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText22/SenateText22/S2189.pdf) Calkin, Mendes, Mack, Acosta, Anderson**,**AN ACT RELATING TO HUMAN SERVICES -- HEALTH CARE FOR FAMILIES (Creates the "Medicaid Employer Assessment.")

<http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText22/SenateText22/S2189.pdf>

Senate Bill No. [2237](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText22/SenateText22/S2237.pdf) Calkin, Mendes, Mack, Acosta, Anderson, Zurier**,**AN ACT RELATING TO LABOR AND LABOR RELATIONS -- MINIMUM WAGES (Requires employers with 50 or more employees to pay "hazard pay" to employees involved in providing essential services during a declared public health emergency.)

<http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText22/SenateText22/S2237.pdf>

Senate Bill No. [2238](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText22/SenateText22/S2238.pdf) Calkin, Mendes, Mack, Anderson, Zurier**,**AN ACT RELATING TO LABOR AND LABOR RELATIONS -- MINIMUM WAGES--OVERTIME WAGES (Exempts certain executive, administrative, and professional employees from overtime pay if their weekly wages exceed one thousand thirty-six dollars ($1,036), an increase from the current two hundred dollars ($200).)

<http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText22/SenateText22/S2238.pdf>

Senate Bill No. [2239](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText22/SenateText22/S2239.pdf) Calkin, Mendes, Mack, Acosta, Anderson, Zurier**,**AN ACT RELATING TO LABOR AND LABOR RELATIONS -- PAYMENT OF WAGES (Defines and recognize the existence and potential liability of lead entities concerning the payment of wages.)

<http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText22/SenateText22/S2239.pdf>

Senate Bill No. [2240](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText22/SenateText22/S2240.pdf) Raptakis, Quezada, Ciccone, Burke, Lombardo, DiMario, Lombardi, Anderson, Murray, Euer**,**AN ACT RELATING TO LABOR AND LABOR RELATIONS -- MINIMUM WAGES (Increases the minimum hourly wage commencing January 1, 2027, by an amount equal to the total percentage increase in the Consumer Price Index for all Urban Consumers (CPI-U) for the Northeast Region for the calendar year 2025.)

<http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText22/SenateText22/S2240.pdf>

Senate Bill No. [2241](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText22/SenateText22/S2241.pdf) Calkin, Mendes, Mack, Acosta, Bell**,**AN ACT RELATING TO LABOR AND LABOR RELATIONS -- MINIMUM WAGES (Effective January 1, 2023, increases the minimum hourly wage to fourteen dollars and fifty cents ($14.50) to sixteen dollars and seventy-five cents ($16.75) the next year, the next year to nineteen dollars ($19.00).)

<http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText22/SenateText22/S2241.pdf>

Senate Bill No. [2243](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText22/SenateText22/S2243.pdf) Cano, DiMario, Quezada, Euer, Lawson, Anderson, Seveney, Burke, Kallman, DiPalma**,**AN ACT RELATING TO LABOR AND LABOR RELATIONS -- RHODE ISLAND PARENTAL AND FAMILY MEDICAL LEAVE ACT (Increases the amount of parental or family leave available to an employee from thirteen (13) weeks to twenty-four (24) weeks in any two (2) calendar years.)

<http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText22/SenateText22/S2243.pdf>

Senate Bill No. [2246](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText22/SenateText22/S2246.pdf) Kallman, Coyne, Sosnowski, Goodwin, Acosta, Zurier, Mack, Cano, DiPalma, Seveney**,**AN ACT RELATING TO LABOR AND LABOR RELATIONS - TIP PROTECTION (Prohibits employers from receiving any portion of the tips given by customers to their tipped employees, with limited exceptions for credit card service charges.)

<http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText22/SenateText22/S2246.pdf>

Senate Bill No. [2263](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText22/SenateText22/S2263.pdf) Picard**,**AN ACT RELATING TO TAXATION -- STATE TAX OFFICIALS (Changes the rate of interest for underpayments of tax to prime rate plus six percent (6%). Also limits the assessment of interest to four (4) calendar years prior to the date on which notice of the delinquent payment is sent.)

<http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText22/SenateText22/S2263.pdf>

Senate Bill No. [2264](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText22/SenateText22/S2264.pdf) Murray, McCaffrey, Ciccone, Pearson, Goodwin, Cano, Seveney, Acosta, Sosnowski, Miller**,**AN ACT RELATING TO TAXATION -- PERSONAL INCOME TAX (Adds one new income tax bracket for purposes of state income taxation.)

<http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText22/SenateText22/S2264.pdf>

House Bill No. [7374](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText22/HouseText22/H7374.pdf)

**BY**  Potter, McGaw, Kislak, Felix, Morales

**ENTITLED,**AN ACT RELATING TO PUBLIC PROPERTY AND WORKS -- ALL-ELECTRIC BUILDING ACT (Provides that no city or town would issue a permit for the construction of new buildings that are not an all-electric building, if the initial application for a permit was submitted after December 31, 2023, unless certain circumstances apply.)

<http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText22/HouseText22/H7374.pdf>

House Bill No. [7385](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText22/HouseText22/H7385.pdf)

**BY**  McEntee, Cortvriend, Solomon, Caldwell, Craven

**ENTITLED,**AN ACT RELATING TO LABOR AND LABOR RELATIONS -- EMPLOYMENT SECURITY FUND -- GENERAL PROVISIONS (Appropriates federal American Rescue Plan Act funds to the state employment security fund in an amount sufficient to restore the fund to its level immediately prior to the governor's March 9, 2020, emergency declaration.)

<http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText22/HouseText22/H7385.pdf>

House Bill No. [7388](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText22/HouseText22/H7388.pdf)

**BY**  Amore, Henries, Craven, Caldwell, Batista, Speakman, Donovan

**ENTITLED,**AN ACT RELATING TO HEALTH AND SAFETY - CATASTROPHIC ILLNESS IN CHILDREN RELIEF FUND (Establishes Children's Catastrophic Illness in Children Relief Fund to provide finance assistance to families for medical expenses not covered by state or federal programs or insurance contract.) (Paid for through an assessment on employers)

<http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText22/HouseText22/H7388.pdf>

House Bill No. [7400](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText22/HouseText22/H7400.pdf) Shanley, Carson, Edwards, Ruggiero, Cortvriend, Barros**,**AN ACT RELATING TO COMMERCIAL LAW -- GENERAL REGULATORY PROVISIONS -- RHODE ISLAND DATA TRANSPARENCY AND PRIVACY PROTECTION ACT (Creates the "Rhode Island data Transparency and Privacy Protection Act" to identify information collected by online service providers and commercial websites.)

<http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText22/HouseText22/H7400.pdf>

House Bill No. [7440](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText22/HouseText22/H7440.pdf) Alzate, Amore, Williams, Slater, Speakman, Kazarian, Barros, Potter, Diaz, Kislak**,**AN ACT RELATING TO TAXATION -- PERSONAL INCOME TAX (Adds one new income tax bracket for purposes of state income taxation.)

<http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText22/HouseText22/H7440.pdf>

House Bill No. [7444](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText22/HouseText22/H7444.pdf) Cassar, Giraldo, Kislak, Ajello, Shallcross Smith, Alzate, Solomon, Caldwell, Lombardi, Tanzi**,**AN ACT RELATING TO LABOR AND LABOR RELATIONS -- TEMPORARY DISABILITY INSURANCE -- GENERAL PROVISIONS (Increases the taxable wage upon which employees make contributions to the TDI and TCI funds and increases the maximum weeks for temporary caregivers from 4 to 12 weeks.)

<http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText22/HouseText22/H7444.pdf>

House Bill No. [7463](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText22/HouseText22/H7463.pdf) Perez, Vella-Wilkinson, Williams, Batista, Lima, Felix, Diaz, Bennett, Solomon, Costantino**,**AN ACT RELATING TO LABOR AND LABOR RELATIONS -- RHODE ISLAND PARENTAL AND FAMILY MEDICAL LEAVE ACT (Grants unpaid pregnancy leave to all part-time workers, would clarify their access to unpaid sick leave during their pregnancy, and would provide additional protections for pregnant workers who work in the medical field.)

<http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText22/HouseText22/H7463.pdf>