**An Update from the State House**

**What’s in the Governor’s FY2019 Budget – The Last Articles**

**Article 15 – Relating to Children and Families**

*This Article is set to be heard by the House Finance Committee, Wednesday, March 7th at the Rise (approximately 4:30 p.m. in Room 35)*

Article 15 addresses what happens when a child in the DCYF system turns 18 years of age. Under current law, the Department meets with each child 6 months before he/she turns 18 to discuss a transition plan to exit the state system at 18. Article 15 allows one of the options to be a “Voluntary Placement Agreement” which allows for supervised independent living settings such as shared apartments or homes, living with relatives or mentors, living at college or another vocational setting. Under an agreement, the state could continue to provide payment for these housing arrangements. To qualify, the young adult has to be in the state’s legal custody at 18 or be an adopted foster child where the adoption took place after the age of 16, AND the young adult is 1) getting a GED, 2) attending a post-secondary education program, 3) is attending a job training program, 4) is employed at least 80 hours a month, or 4) is incapable of participating in any of the previously mentioned programs due to a medical condition. If the Agreement is signed, the state will continue to provide services until the age of 21.

Article 15 also calls for free child care for families at 180% of the federal poverty level if a family member is enrolled in a Rhode Island higher education facility and the family needs child care in order for the member to attend school.

Lastly, this Article changes state child care payments to a tier payment system that is based on the provider’s ability to meet the State Quality Rating System for child care providers. No payment rate could be below $193 for licensed child care centers, nor lower than $169 for child care homes. (Providence rates equal the 75th percentile of market rate)

**Article 16 – Relating to Debt Management Act Joint Resolutions**

This Article allows for the issuance of $19.8 million in new revenue bonds to be used for projects at the University of RI. The projects are as follows:

* $11 million for repaving and reconstruction of parks, internal roadways, walkways and other infrastructure at the Kingston campus, the Narraganset Bay campus and the W. Alton Jones Campus. The total debt service, assuming a 5% interest rate, is not expected to exceed $17.7 million over 20 years.
* $6.5 million for engineering and construction upgrades to utility-related infrastructure on the URI Kingston campus, including steam, water, sanitation, electrical, and storm water systems. The total debt service over 20 years is expected to be $10.4 million.
* $2.3 million for the second phase of the fire safety enhancements throughout URI’s auxiliary enterprise buildings, including on-going installation of code-compliant fire detection systems/alarms, sprinkler systems, and other improvements. Total debt service is $3.7 million if a 5% interest rate is assumed.

**Article 17 – Relating to the Edward O. Hawkins and Thomas C. Slater Medical Marijuana Act**

*This Article is scheduled to be heard in the Senate Finance Committee Thursday, March 1st at the Rise (approximately 4:30 p.m.) in Room 211. It will also be heard in the House Finance Committee March 20th at the Rise in Room 35.*

Article 17 makes numerous changes to the medical marijuana law in Rhode Island. The Governor’s office believes that all of the proposed changes will generate $5 million in new revenue for the state.

The Article increases the number of medical marijuana compassion centers from 3 to 15 while also increasing the licensing application fee for these facilities from $250 to $10,000. The fee for a renewal of a license increases from $5,000 to $30,000. Regulation and oversight of the centers would be moved from the Department of Health to the Department of Business Regulation. Patients residing in Connecticut and Massachusetts would be permitted to purchase marijuana from these facilities in Rhode Island.

Article 17 lowers the number of marijuana plants (starting July 1, 2018) that patients and caregivers may grow, from 12 mature and 12 immature plants, to 8 mature and 8 immature plants. The language does allow a patient to possess 3 ounces of marijuana, as opposed to the current limit of 2.5 ounces.

One big change in the proposed Article allows practitioners to prescribe medical marijuana to treat “acute pain” not just “chronic pain.” Experts in the medical field have said this would include conditions such as a broken bone, dental work, or surgery. These conditions could allow someone to get a medical marijuana card for up to 6 months.

**Article 18 – Relating to the Effective Date**

This is the last Article of the budget, and states that the effective date is July 1, 2018, unless another date is explicitly mentioned in another portion of the budget.

The following bills were filed last week:

Senate Bill No. [2334](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText18/SenateText18/S2334.pdf)

**BY**  Ciccone, Jabour, Miller, Archambault, Goldin

**ENTITLED,**AN ACT RELATING TO STATE AFFAIRS AND GOVERNMENT -- LOW-INCOME ENERGY COST ASSISTANCE (Creates an energy assistance program within the governor's energy assistance office with incentives for regular payments and conservation.)

Senate Bill No. [2336](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText18/SenateText18/S2336.pdf)

**BY**  Crowley, Jabour, Nesselbush, Metts, Quezada

**ENTITLED,**AN ACT RELATING TO STATE AFFAIRS AND GOVERNMENT -- THE HOME ENERGY RATE AFFORDABILITY ACT (Creates the Home Energy Rate Affordability Program to ensure that utility rates are affordable for low-income households.)

Senate Bill No. [2354](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText18/SenateText18/S2354.pdf)

**BY**  Miller, Sosnowski, Ruggerio, Coyne, Lombardo

**ENTITLED,**AN ACT RELATING TO HEALTH AND SAFETY - PLASTIC WASTE REDUCTION ACT (Prohibits large retail establishments from providing plastic checkout bags/all retail establishments providing polystyrene food containers with enforcement by municipalities with opt out election effective January 1, 2021.)

Senate Bill No. [2375](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText18/SenateText18/S2375.pdf)

**BY**  Lynch Prata

**ENTITLED,**AN ACT RELATING TO STATE AFFAIRS AND GOVERNMENT -- TOURISM AND DEVELOPMENT (Reinstates for one year, from July 1, 2018, to June 30, 2019, the formula used to distribute hotel tax funds prior to January 1, 2016.)

Senate Bill No. [2388](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText18/SenateText18/S2388.pdf)

**BY**  Archambault, Picard, Fogarty, Lombardo

**ENTITLED,**AN ACT RELATING TO TAXATION - BUSINESS CORPORATION TAX (Changes the minimum corporate tax by calculating the tax based on gross income.)

Senate Bill No. [2398](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText18/SenateText18/S2398.pdf)

**BY**  Pearson

**ENTITLED,**AN ACT RELATING TO PUBLIC OFFICERS AND EMPLOYEES -- HEALTH INSURANCE BENEFITS (Allows small business employers to purchase health insurance for its employees through the state employee group plan.)

enate Bill No. [2399](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText18/SenateText18/S2399.pdf)

**BY**  Sosnowski, Crowley, Calkin, Goldin, Coyne

**ENTITLED,**AN ACT RELATING TO INSURANCE -- ACCIDENT AND SICKNESS INSURANCE POLICIES (Prohibits insurance companies from varying the premium rates charged for a health coverage plan based on the gender of the individual policy holder, enrollee, subscriber, or member.)

Senate Bill No. [2400](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText18/SenateText18/S2400.pdf)

**BY**  Goldin, Calkin, Miller, Sosnowski, Crowley

**ENTITLED,**AN ACT RELATING TO INSURANCE - ACCIDENT AND SICKNESS INSURANCE POLICIES (Establishes a special enrollment provision for pregnant women to obtain health insurance coverage at any time after the commencement of the pregnancy.)

Senate Bill No. [2423](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText18/SenateText18/S2423.pdf)

**BY**  Metts, Quezada, Jabour, Goldin, Goodwin

**ENTITLED,**AN ACT RELATING TO BUSINESSES AND PROFESSIONS - REAL ESTATE BROKERS AND SALESPERSONS (Increases the maximum administrative penalty levied against real estate brokers and salespersons from one thousand dollars ($1,000) to two thousand dollars ($2,000) per violation.)

Senate Bill No. [2448](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText18/SenateText18/S2448.pdf)

**BY**  Goldin, Conley, Miller, Calkin, Jabour

**ENTITLED,**AN ACT RELATING TO ELECTIONS -- CONDUCT OF ELECTION AND VOTING EQUIPMENT, AND SUPPLIES (Repeals the voter identification law.)

Senate Bill No. [2449](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText18/SenateText18/S2449.pdf)

(by request)

**BY**  Cote, Lombardo

**ENTITLED,**AN ACT RELATING TO COURTS AND CIVIL PROCEDURE -- PROCEDURE GENERALLY (Reduces the statutory interest on judgments for money in civil actions from twelve percent (12%) to six percent (6%).)

Senate Bill No. [2464](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText18/SenateText18/S2464.pdf)

**BY**  Coyne, Miller, Lombardo, Sosnowski, Ruggerio

**ENTITLED,**AN ACT RELATING TO CRIMINAL OFFENSES -- TOBACCO AND NICOTINE PRODUCTS -- CHILDREN (Provides certain restrictions on the sale of tobacco products, enhances the definition of "tobacco products", and raises the legal minimum age to purchase tobacco products and nicotine-delivery systems from 18 to 21 years of age.)

Senate Bill No. [2470](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText18/SenateText18/S2470.pdf)

**BY**  Goldin, Fogarty, Miller, Goodwin, Lynch Prata

**ENTITLED,**AN ACT RELATING TO LABOR AND LABOR RELATIONS - TEMPORARY DISABILITY INSURANCE (Amends the computation formula relative to temporary disability insurance and adds siblings and caregivers to those workers eligible to receive temporary caregiver insurance.)

Senate Bill No. [2471](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText18/SenateText18/S2471.pdf)

**BY**  Ciccone, Calkin, Goldin, Euer, Nesselbush

**ENTITLED,**AN ACT RELATING TO LABOR AND LABOR RELATIONS -- HEALTHY WORKPLACE (Creates the "Healthy Workplace Act of 2018" and establishes a cause of action against employers and employees for workplace bullying, harassment and other abusive conduct that is tolerated by employers.)

Senate Bill No. [2476](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText18/SenateText18/S2476.pdf)

**BY**  Goldin, Calkin

**ENTITLED,**AN ACT RELATING TO LABOR AND LABOR RELATIONS -- MINIMUM WAGE--GRATUITIES (Incrementally increases from the $3.89 per hour subminimum wage for tipped workers to $9.00 per hour on January 1, 2022, Starting on January 1, 2023, the minimum hourly wage for tipped workers would be equal to the state's regular minimum hourly wage.)

Senate Bill No. [2478](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText18/SenateText18/S2478.pdf)

**BY**  Satchell, Miller, Goldin, Nesselbush, Gallo

**ENTITLED,**AN ACT RELATING TO LABOR AND LABOR RELATIONS -- MINIMUM WAGES (Gradually increases the minimum hourly wage for employees of employers who provide services to five (5) or more persons with developmental disabilities.)

Senate Bill No. [2479](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText18/SenateText18/S2479.pdf)

**BY**  Lombardi, Nesselbush, Lynch Prata, McCaffrey, Goodwin

**ENTITLED,**AN ACT RELATING TO LABOR AND LABOR RELATIONS -- UNLAWFUL EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES (Amends the fair employment practices act by clearly establishing that employees of a defendant employer may be individually liable for unfair employment practices.)