**This Week at the State House**

This week is the last week before the General Assembly’s Spring Recess (April 19-23).

**Medical Marijuana Use**

Yesterday, April 12th, the House Committee on State Government, heard testimony on H.5021, An Act Relating to Food and Drugs – medical marijuana. The bill bars employers from refusing to hire, discharge or discriminate against an individual because of his/her status as a medical marijuana cardholder, or if the person tests positive for the components of the drug. The employer is permitted to take action if the person is impaired during the hours of employment. The issue of marijuana use will continue to be in the forefront of future legislative debates. The business community continues to advocate for protections for employers that participate in federal contracts, and for the ability to test employees as the employer sees fit.

**Unfair Practice of Law in Real Estate**

H.5985, An Act Relating to Insurance – Rhode Island Title Insurers Act, will be a topic of discussion in the House Judiciary Committee Tuesday, April 13th, at the Rise (approximately 4:30 p.m.). This bill provides that only attorneys licensed in the state of Rhode Island can act as title insurance agents and only they can determine insurability and marketability of property. H.5985 bans title insurers from discounting title insurance premiums and prohibits sharing fees from the premiums except between licensed title agents and licensed attorneys. If passed, each real estate closings would require another attorney. The estimated increase in closing cost fees is approximately $240. Rhode Island currently has the second lowest closing costs in the New England region (New Hampshire is the lowest).

Written testimony may be submitted via **HouseJudiciary@rilegislature.gov**

Indicate your name, bill number, and viewpoint (for/against/neither) at top of message.
This inbox is for written testimony only. DEADLINE: Written testimony should be submitted no later than 1:00 PM Tuesday, April 13th. For faster processing, it is recommended that testimony is submitted as a PDF file.

VERBAL TESTIMONY \*DEADLINE: Requests for verbal testimony must be submitted via the link, by 4:00 PM on Monday, April 12, 2021.

For verbal testimony requests, [CLICK HERE](https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=LBHmn1akN0aJ3A8oTO_8ZpR-enp9FkxEjcJIbBjmg-tUMTVTWUJURFJQV0hHVjRLNTFHMEpZQjVITS4u)

**Medicaid Employer Assessment**

On Thursday, April 15th at the Rise (approximately 4:30 p.m.), the House Finance Committee will hear testimony on H.5448, an Act Relating to Human Services – Medicaid Employer Assessment. The bill can be viewed at <http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText21/HouseText21/H5448.pdf>

H.5448 affects any employer with 300 or more employees located within the state of Rhode Island. These employers would be assessed a quarterly fee, payable to the state, for each full or part-time employee who is a Medicaid beneficiary. Nonprofit organizations and government entities are excluded. The fee to be assessed equals 10% of the wages paid to the qualifying employee up to a maximum of $1500 per qualifying employee. Certain working adults with disabilities, employees enrolled in Rite Share and employees with only children enrolled in Medicaid are not considered “qualifying employees” for assessment purposes. If passed, the program would start January 1, 2022.

Written testimony may be submitted via HouseFinance@rilegislature.gov

Indicate your name, bill number, and viewpoint (for/against/neither) at top of message.
This inbox is for written testimony only. DEADLINE: Written testimony should be submitted no later than 1:00PM April 15th. For faster processing, it is recommended that testimony is submitted as a PDF file.

VERBAL TESTIMONY: \*DEADLINE: Requests for verbal testimony must be submitted via the link, by 4:00 PM on Wednesday, April 14, 2021.

For verbal testimony requests, [CLICK HERE](https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=LBHmn1akN0aJ3A8oTO_8ZpR-enp9FkxEjcJIbBjmg-tUOUhDU0lHNkxaWDg4UU83OTZJRkFEMEJSWi4u)

**PPP Loan Forgiveness Taxation**

On Thursday, April 15th at 5:00 p.m., the Senate Finance will take testimony on the Article 2 of H.6121. Like last week in the House Finance Committee, this is the Governor’s proposal to tax PPP loan forgiveness amounts over $150,000. As background, the federal government created the PPP loan program under the CARES Act in 2020. Normally, the IRS considers most types of loan forgiveness as taxable unearned income. However, the US Congress, US Senate and US President decided to change the rule as it applies to PPP loan forgiveness, thus making the loans non-taxable from a federal tax point of view. Rhode Island is a federal tax piggy-back state, so the same tax treatment will apply to Rhode Island unless the General Assembly and Governor tax action. Under Article 2, if your company received a loan of $150,000, there would be no tax owed. If your company received a loan of $160,000, $10,000 of the loan forgiveness would become taxable.

Article 2 also contains a provision that gives the tax administrator the authority to exclude the amount of any PPP loan forgiveness from state taxation if the federal government allocates any funds to the state for general revenue replacement. The tax administrator would be required to provide written notice to the House and Senate that the loans are no longer taxable.

The Senate Finance Committee will also hear testimony on S.815, An Act Relating to Taxation – Business Corporation Tax. This bill specifically exempts from taxation any loan forgiveness under the federal Paycheck 2 Protection Program.

Written testimony can be submitted to the committee by emailing it to: jplume@rilegislature.gov
\*Written Testimony must be submitted prior to 2:00 PM on Thursday, April 15, 2021, in order for it to be provided to the members of the committee at the hearing and to be included in the meeting records.

Members of the public can request to provide verbal testimony to the committee through the following link:[VERBAL TESTIMONY](https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=LBHmn1akN0aJ3A8oTO_8ZrrkHo3ATJRAp4ByeeV8cWRUNzY2SE1ZOVFaOU1ZOEY0SkFWMEREWkpZUy4u)

\*Requests to provide verbal testimony must be submitted by 4:00 PM on Wednesday,
April 14, 2021.

**Parking Lot EV Charging Station Requirements**

S.173, An Act Relating to Motor and Motor Vehicles – Parking Facility and Privileges, will be heard in the Senate Housing & Municipal Government Committee, Thursday, April 15th at 3:00 p.m. All new parking lots, and existing parking lots that expand 50% or more, would be required to include designated parking spaces and the installation of level 2 EV charging stations or a dual charger to be shared by two parking spaces before completion of the project. Existing parking lots not undergoing an expansion would have to comply by December 31, 2022.

The amount of designated parking spaces shall be the greater of:

(1) One space or 1% of the total spaces for restaurants, retail businesses, recreational and cultural venues

(2) One space or 1% of the total spaces for medical, industrial and municipal facilities;

(3) One space or 3% of the total spaces for all commercial lodging facilities; and

(4) One space or 5% of the total spaces for multi-household residential facilities.

The owner of a parking lot that fails to comply is subject to a civil penalty of $10,000.

Written testimony can be submitted to the committee by emailing it to: slegislation@rilegislature.gov \*Written Testimony must be submitted prior to 2:00 PM on Thursday, April 15, 2021, in order for it to be provided to the members of the committee at the hearing and to be included in the meeting records.

Members of the public can request to provide verbal testimony to the committee through the following link:[VERBAL TESTIMONY](https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=LBHmn1akN0aJ3A8oTO_8ZrrkHo3ATJRAp4ByeeV8cWRUN0ZBQlZOTERWRkpIQTUwSDFGQ1hKUU1URy4u) \*Requests to provide verbal testimony must be submitted by 4:00 PM on Wednesday, April 14, 2021.

The following new bills have been filed:

House Bill No. [6218](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText21/HouseText21/H6218.pdf) Fenton-Fung**,**AN ACT RELATING TO LABOR AND LABOR RELATIONS -- EMPLOYMENT SECURITY -- BENEFITS -- RHODE ISLAND BACK TO WORK INCENTIVE PROGRAM (Provides 13 weeks of benefits to persons returning to work of $150 per week prorated plus additional compensation up to $1,950 prorated with benefits expiring on January 1, 2022.) <http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText21/HouseText21/H6218.pdf>

House Bill No. [6219](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText21/HouseText21/H6219.pdf) Slater, O'Brien, Potter, Felix, Williams, Morales, Tanzi**,**AN ACT RELATING TO LABOR AND LABOR RELATIONS -- RIGHT TO ORGANIZE (Allows labor organizations/unions to organize any employees who work for employers in an industry that is regulated by the medical marijuana act or cannabis-regulated industry.) <http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText21/HouseText21/H6219.pdf>

Senate Bill No. [788](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText21/SenateText21/S0788.pdf) Lombardi, Lombardo, Raptakis, Archambault, Picard, Ciccone**,**AN ACT RELATING TO COMMERCIAL LAW -- GENERAL REGULATORY PROVISIONS (Prevents third-party delivery service from using the likeness, registered trademark, or any intellectual property belonging to the merchant to falsely suggest sponsorship or endorsement by, or affiliation with the merchant without the merchant’s consent.) <http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText21/SenateText21/S0788.pdf>

Senate Bill No. [789](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText21/SenateText21/S0789.pdf) (Secretary of State) Archambault, Pearson**,**AN ACT RELATING TO CORPORATIONS, ASSOCIATIONS AND PARTNERSHIPS -- RHODE ISLAND BUSINESS CORPORATION ACT (Requires that annual reports of domestic and foreign business corporations, nonprofit corporations, and limited liability companies be filed with the secretary of state between February 1 and May 1 of each year.) <http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText21/SenateText21/S0789.pdf>

Senate Bill No. [808](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText21/SenateText21/S0808.pdf) Lombardi, Ciccone, Raptakis, Lombardo, Archambault, Picard**,**AN ACT RELATING TO LABOR AND LABOR RELATIONS -- EMPLOYMENT SECURITY -- BENEFITS -- RHODE ISLAND BACK TO WORK INCENTIVE PROGRAM (Provides 13 weeks of benefits to persons returning to work of $150 per week prorated plus additional compensation up to $1,950 prorated with benefits expiring on January 1, 2022.) <http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText21/SenateText21/S0808.pdf>

Senate Bill No. [815](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText21/SenateText21/S0815.pdf) Cano**,**AN ACT RELATING TO TAXATION -- BUSINESS CORPORATION TAX (Exempts from taxation any loan forgiveness under the federal Paycheck Protection Program.) <http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText21/SenateText21/S0815.pdf>