

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2023

A N A C T

RELATING TO EDUCATION -- THE RHODE ISLAND CLIMATE CHANGE AND OCEAN PROTECTION WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT ACT

Introduced By: Senators Lawson, Lauria, DiMario, Cano, Euer, Murray, Valverde, Britto, Gu, and Zurier

Date Introduced: March 07, 2023

Referred To: Senate Finance

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Title 16 of the General Laws entitled "EDUCATION" is hereby amended by  
2 adding thereto the following chapter:

3 CHAPTER 112

4 THE RHODE ISLAND CLIMATE CHANGE AND OCEAN PROTECTION WORKFORCE

5 DEVELOPMENT ACT

6 **16-112-1. Definitions.**

7 As used in this chapter:

8 (1) "Apprenticeship" means a proven model of job preparation that combines paid on-the-  
9 job learning with related instruction to progressively increase workers' skill levels and wages. It is  
10 an employer-driven model that provides an effective way for employers to recruit, train, and retain  
11 highly skilled workers. As an "earn and learn" strategy, apprenticeship offers job seekers immediate  
12 employment that offers advancement along a career path and a nationally recognized credential.

13 (2) "Blue economy" means an economy built on the sustainable use of ocean resources for  
14 economic growth, improved livelihoods, and jobs while preserving the health of the ocean  
15 ecosystem.

16 (3) "Climate change education" means nonformal and formal interdisciplinary learning at  
17 all age levels about:

18 (i) Climate change, climate adaptation and mitigation, climate resilience, and climate

1 justice; and

2 (ii) The effects of climate change, climate adaptation and mitigation, climate resilience,  
3 and climate justice on the environmental, energy, social, and economic systems of the United  
4 States.

5 (4) "Climate literacy" means competence or knowledge of climate change, its causes and  
6 impacts, and the technical, scientific, economic, and social dynamics of promising solutions.

7 (5) "Climate justice" means the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people,  
8 regardless of race, color, culture, national origin, or income, with respect to the development,  
9 implementation, and enforcement of policies and projects to ensure that each person enjoys the  
10 same degree of protection from the adverse effects of climate change.

11 (6) "Environmental justice" means the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all  
12 people, regardless of race, color, culture, national origin, or income, with respect to the  
13 development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies to  
14 ensure that each person enjoys:

15 (i) The same degree of protection from environmental and health hazards; and

16 (ii) Equal access to any federal agency action on environmental justice issues in order to  
17 have a healthy environment in which to live, learn, work, and recreate.

18 (7) "Environmental justice community" means a community with significant representation  
19 of communities of color, low-income communities, or Tribal and indigenous communities that  
20 experiences, or is at risk of experiencing, higher or more adverse human health or environmental  
21 effects as compared to other communities.

22 (8) "Green economy" means an economy that results in improved human and economic  
23 well-being and social equity by significantly reducing environmental risks and ecological  
24 scarcities.

25 (9) "Institution of higher education" has the meaning given the term in section 101 of the  
26 Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1001).

27 (10) "Local educational agency; State educational agency" have the meanings given those  
28 terms in section 8101 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 7801).

29 (11) "Nonformal" means, with respect to learning, out-of-school educational programming  
30 carried out by nonprofit organizations and public agencies.

31 (12) "Nonprofit organization" means an organization described in section 501(c)(3) of the  
32 Internal Revenue Code of 1986 and exempt from taxation under 501(a) of that Code.

33 (13) "Ocean literacy" means competence or knowledge of the ocean, its interaction with  
34 humans, and the technical, scientific, economic, and social dynamics of ocean protection.

1 (14) "Ocean protection education" means nonformal and formal interdisciplinary learning  
2 at all age levels about:

3 (i) Ocean life, human interactions with the ocean, the ocean's physical geography, and  
4 ocean-related environmental issues; and

5 (ii) The effects of ocean-related environmental issues on the environmental, energy, social,  
6 and economic systems of the United States.

7 (15) "Union" means an organization of workers who are employed by the same employer  
8 and who use their collective power to enhance the standard of living for all workers and their  
9 families.

10 **16-112-2. Funding.**

11 There shall be an annual appropriation of no less than five hundred thousand dollars  
12 (\$500,000) per fiscal year to invest in:

13 (1) Increasing and enhancing climate and ocean literacy of the Rhode Island workforce by  
14 broadening the understanding of climate change and ocean protection, including possible long-term  
15 and short-term consequences, disproportionate impacts of those consequences, and potential  
16 solutions;

17 (2) Applying the latest scientific and technological discoveries to provide formal and  
18 nonformal learning opportunities to individuals of all ages, including individuals of diverse cultural  
19 and linguistic backgrounds; and

20 (3) Emphasizing actionable information and transferrable skills to help people understand  
21 and promote implementation of new technologies, programs, and incentives related to climate  
22 change, climate adaptation and mitigation, climate resilience, climate justice, environmental  
23 justice, and ocean protection.

24 **16-112-3. Grant program.**

25 (a) The department of labor and training shall disburse these funds to eligible recipients.

26 (b) Eligible recipients shall include:

27 (1) State and local educational agencies, in collaboration with local businesses and local  
28 nonprofit organizations, for the implementation of climate and ocean literacy plans for formal and  
29 nonformal climate change and ocean protection education for people ages sixteen (16) years and  
30 up that:

31 (i) Are aligned with state education standards;

32 (ii) Ensure that students graduate from high school with climate and ocean literacy;

33 (iii) Include relevant teacher training and professional development; and

34 (iv) Include at least one of the following:

1 (A) Integration of key climate change and ocean protection concepts into state education  
2 standards for science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), civics and social studies,  
3 and other relevant subject areas during the next revision of such standards.

4 (B) Development of climate change and ocean protection education frameworks and model  
5 curricula and curation and dissemination of existing climate change and ocean protection  
6 curriculum materials.

7 (C) Creation of applied learning project-based models, such as models making optimum  
8 use of green features improvements to school facilities, such as energy systems, lighting systems,  
9 water management, waste management, and school grounds improvements.

10 (D) Incorporation of climate change mitigation and blue and green technologies into new  
11 and existing career and technical education career tracks and work-based learning experiences,  
12 including development of partnerships with labor organizations, trade organizations, and  
13 apprenticeship programs.

14 (2) Institutions of higher education and networks or partnerships of such institutions to  
15 engage teams of faculty and students to develop applied climate research and deliver to local  
16 community's direct services related to local climate mitigation and adaptation and ocean protection  
17 issues, with priority given to projects that:

18 (i) Foster long-term campus-community partnerships;

19 (ii) Show potential to scale work beyond the grant term;

20 (iii) Incorporate faculty training and professional development;

21 (iv) Are inclusive for all segments of the population; and

22 (v) Promote equitable and just outcomes.

23 (3) Professional associations and academic disciplinary societies for projects that build  
24 capacity at the state and national levels for continuing education by practicing professionals and  
25 the general public in blue and green economy fields.

26 (4) Youth development and nonprofit organization programs that engage in community-  
27 based climate mitigation and adaptation and ocean protection work that includes a substantive  
28 educational and apprenticeship component.

29 (c)(1) The department of labor and training shall administer the grant program required by  
30 subsection (a) of this section.

31 (2) The department of labor shall annually consult with other relevant agencies of state and  
32 municipal government, nonprofit organizations, businesses, labor unions, and community-based  
33 organizations to determine ways in which grant making under subsection (b) of this section can  
34 enhance and support other climate change and ocean protection education, workforce development

1 and training, and environmental justice goals.

2 (3) The department of labor and training shall direct at least forty percent (40%) of all funds  
3 appropriated for grants under subsections (b)(2) through (b)(4) of this section to environmental  
4 justice communities.

5 (4) The commission on post-secondary education shall establish communities of practice  
6 with respect to each of subsections (b)(1) through (b)(4) of this section in order to accelerate  
7 learning.

8 **16-112-4. Reporting.**

9 The department of labor and training shall report annually to the general assembly and the  
10 governor no later than December 31 of each year on the status and progress of the program  
11 authorized by this chapter.

12 SECTION 2. This act shall take effect upon passage.

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EXPLANATION  
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL  
OF  
A N A C T  
RELATING TO EDUCATION -- THE RHODE ISLAND CLIMATE CHANGE AND OCEAN  
PROTECTION WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT ACT

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- 1           This act would appropriate five hundred thousand dollars (\$500,000) per fiscal year to
- 2 invest in a climate change and ocean protection workforce development grant program.
- 3           This act would take effect upon passage.

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