

2016 -- H 7426

=====  
LC004164  
=====

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2016

\_\_\_\_\_

A N A C T

RELATING TO EDUCATION - THE RHODE ISLAND EDUCATION EQUITY ACT

Introduced By: Representatives McNamara, Amore, Naughton, Malik, and Azzinaro

Date Introduced: January 29, 2016

Referred To: House Health, Education & Welfare

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

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

3 CHAPTER 87.1

4 RHODE ISLAND EDUCATION EQUITY ACT

5 **16-87.1-1. Short title.** -- This chapter shall be known and may be cited as the "Rhode  
6 Island Education Equity Act."

7 **16-87.1-2. Legislative findings.** -- The general assembly finds as follows:

8 (1) Children who come from low income families or otherwise from impoverished  
9 backgrounds are significantly less likely to be proficient in reading and math than other students,  
10 experiencing an education achievement gap (hereinafter referred to in this chapter as the  
11 "achievement gap") that is difficult to close as the child moves into adolescence and adulthood.

12 (2) For students who come from low income families or otherwise from impoverished  
13 backgrounds and who are also English language learners, this achievement gap in proficiency in  
14 reading and math is widened even further.

15 (3) There is overwhelming evidence that the state of Rhode Island could expect a very  
16 high return to the public by investing in high quality early childhood education for all of our  
17 children.

18 (4) Early childhood investments targeted towards program development for  
19 disadvantaged children will help to promote both efficiency and educational equality for the

1 children of our state.

2 (5) While recognizing the efforts that have been made through the "prekindergarten  
3 education act", chapter 87 of this title, more effort can and should be expended to reach children  
4 at an even younger age.

5 (6) By enacting this law, the general assembly seeks to develop a research-based model  
6 for children ages three (3) years of age and under and that focuses on low income families and for  
7 children that are English language learners to eliminate the achievement gap.

8 **16-87.1-3. Pilot program authorized. --** (a) The Rhode Island department of elementary  
9 and secondary education shall develop a research-based model full-time preschool pilot program  
10 for children age three (3) years of age and under that will focus on low income families and  
11 children that are English language learners. The purpose of this program shall be to eliminate the  
12 achievement gap that currently exists for this population upon entering kindergarten. The  
13 program shall include available data about the number of children birth through age eight (8)  
14 years of age in families with limited English skills and the community-based and public preschool  
15 programs and schools that serve them, strategies to increase the number of bilingual preschool  
16 and early elementary educators, and steps to increase dual language instruction opportunities for  
17 children from preschool through grade 3.

18 (b) The program shall incorporate data and information gathered pursuant to the pilot  
19 prekindergarten program established pursuant to chapter 87 of this title.

20 (c) As used herein, the term "low income families" means those earning less than twice  
21 the federal poverty line, also known as the federal poverty threshold.

22 **16-87.1-4. Reporting. --** On or before October 31, 2017, and annually thereafter by  
23 October 31, the Rhode Island department of elementary and secondary education shall report  
24 back to the general assembly and the governor on the status and progress of the pilot program  
25 authorized by this chapter.

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

=====  
LC004164  
=====

EXPLANATION  
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL  
OF  
A N A C T  
RELATING TO EDUCATION - THE RHODE ISLAND EDUCATION EQUITY ACT

\*\*\*

1           The act would establish the Rhode Island Education Equity Act. The act would authorize  
2 the Rhode Island department of elementary and secondary education to develop a research-based  
3 model full-time preschool pilot program for children age three (3) years of age and under that  
4 would focus on low income families and children that are English language learners. The  
5 purpose of this program would be to eliminate the education achievement gap that currently exists  
6 for this population upon entering kindergarten.

7           This act would take effect upon passage.

=====  
LC004164  
=====