It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

SECTION 1. Chapter 16-21 of the General Laws entitled "Health and Safety of Pupils" is hereby amended by adding thereto the following section:


(a) The state of Rhode Island finds and declares that:

(1) Water plays an important role in maintaining a child’s overall health;

(2) Drinking water can positively impact children’s cognitive performance;

(3) Drinking water can improve children’s fine motor skills and visual attention, which helps with learning activities, such as reading;

(4) Drinking water can help people maintain a healthier weight.

(b) The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all newly constructed schools and those schools undergoing major building renovations incorporate adequate water bottle filling stations to increase access to free, easily accessible, safe and good-tasting drinking water on school property.

(1) Major renovations shall mean renovations with a total estimated cost of five hundred thousand dollars ($500,000) or more, or involves the substantial repair, replacement or upgrading of the plumbing system or plumbing fixtures.

(c) All newly constructed public school buildings and public school buildings undergoing major renovations, such as additions within the state of Rhode Island shall be equipped with water bottle filling stations consistent with the requirements of this policy.

(d) The school committees of each city or town and/or the governing authority overseeing
school policies or construction, shall not approve the plans or specifications for a new public school
building, any addition or major renovations of an existing public school building unless the plans
and specifications provide for the following:

(1) A minimum of one water bottle filling station per one hundred (100) people projected
to occupy the building upon completion of the proposed construction;

(2) A minimum of one water bottle filling station on each floor and on each wing of each
school building;

(3) A minimum of one water bottle filling station located in or near gymnasiums, cafeterias
and other high-traffic areas.

(4) Water bottle filling stations may be integrated into drinking fountains;

(5) Schools are encouraged to install touchless bottle filling stations for sanitary reasons.

(e) A water bottle filling station installed in a public school building must:

(1) Dispense clean, cooled, filtered drinking water;

(2) Be regularly cleaned to maintain sanitary conditions; and

(3) Be maintained on a regular basis to ensure they function properly.

(f) Students, teachers, and staff shall be allowed to bring and carry approved water bottles
under the following conditions:

(1) Water bottles shall be made of material that is not easily breakable;

(2) Water bottles shall have a lid to prevent spills;

(3) Water bottles shall be used exclusively for water and no other beverage;

(4) Water bottles shall be allowed in classrooms, but may be excluded from libraries,
computer labs, science labs and other places where it is deemed dangerous to have drinking water;

(5) Misuse of water bottles may be subject to disciplinary action.

SECTION 2. This act shall take effect on January 1, 2022.
EXPLANATION
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
OF
AN ACT
RELATING TO EDUCATION -- HEALTH AND SAFETY OF PUPILS

***

1. This act would require all new school buildings and those undergoing major renovations or substantial repair or replacement to plumbing systems to install water bottle filling stations.

2. This act would take effect on January 1, 2022.