AN ACT
RELATING TO STATE AFFAIRS AND GOVERNMENT -- RHODE ISLAND CLIMATE CORPS

Introduced By: Senators Mendes, and Calkin

Date Introduced: March 24, 2022

Referred To: Senate Environment & Agriculture

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

SECTION 1. Title 42 of the General Laws entitled "STATE AFFAIRS AND GOVERNMENT" is hereby amended by adding thereto the following chapter:

CHAPTER 162
RHODE ISLAND CLIMATE CORPS

42-162-1. Purpose.
The purpose of this act is to create the Rhode Island climate corps to implement a work program that would provide employment doing climate resilience and adaptation work.

42-162-2. Rhode Island climate corps created.
(a) There is hereby created an organization, the name of which is the Rhode Island climate corps, which is to be developed and administered by ServeRI.

(b) The purposes of the Rhode Island climate corps are to:
(1) Increase the opportunities for Rhode Islanders to devote up to a year of service to Rhode Island communities; mobilize the service sector as an innovative solution to clear and pressing environmental problems that negatively impact Rhode Island communities; and
(2) Provide rural and underserved communities in Rhode Island with volunteer resources to help address critical health, human, public safety, educational, and environmental needs; and
(3) Strengthen civic engagement of participants and in communities through volunteer service.

Definitions. As used in this chapter:

(1) "Corps member" means an individual who is at least eighteen (18) years of age and who has committed to not more than twelve (12) months of full-time, part-time, or flex-time service in the Rhode Island climate corps.

(2) "Program host" means a state entity, municipality, or nonprofit organization located or with a physical presence in Rhode Island that has committed to hosting corps members through the Rhode Island climate corps.

(3) "ServeRI" means the Rhode Island commission for national and community service, as required under section 201 of the National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993 and authorized by the Rhode Island general assembly, pursuant to section 1 of chapter 395 of the 2017 public laws, entitled, "The Rhode Island Commission for National Community Service."

42-162-4. Program host eligibility and duties.

(a) The following conditions shall apply to the Rhode Island climate corps:

(1) ServeRI may provide funding to eligible program hosts that have experience administering national service grants and engaging Rhode Islanders in formal service programs in order to enable those hosts to support corps members and undertake eligible projects.

(2) Program hosts that receive funding from ServeRI through the Rhode Island climate corps shall use the funding received to meet costs incurred by hosting and supporting corps members in their service who are participating in eligible projects.

(3) Corps members shall be the responsibility of their program hosts and shall not be employees, or considered to be employees, of the State of Rhode Island for any purpose throughout the duration of their service.

(4) ServeRI and program hosts shall, to the extent practicable, ensure that corps members are placed in projects that match their interests, geographic constraints, skills, and abilities.

(5) Program hosts shall seek to enroll as corps members individuals who reflect the diversity of gender, racial, ethnic, sexual, social, and disability status of Rhode Islanders.

(6) Project eligibility shall be determined by ServeRI and may include weatherization, environmental restoration, and other climate-related projects. Innovative strategies and partnerships are encouraged.

(b) In administering the Rhode Island climate corps, ServeRI shall coordinate with appropriate organizations in the served communities, shall explore service-based solutions that build community capacity to combat climate change, and may engage with existing national service programs.

On or before April 1 annually, ServeRI shall report to the general assembly on the Rhode Island climate corps.

42-162-6. Appropriation.

The sum of five million dollars ($5,000,000) is appropriated from the general fund to ServeRI in fiscal year 2023 for the purpose of administering the Rhode Island climate corps.

42-162-7. Climate corps membership goals.

Within one hundred eighty (180) days following the passage of this act, ServeRI shall seek to establish in 2024 the first class of corps members.

SECTION 2. This act shall take effect upon passage.
EXPLANATION
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
OF
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RELATING TO STATE AFFAIRS AND GOVERNMENT -- RHODE ISLAND CLIMATE CORPS

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1 This act would create the Rhode Island climate corps to implement a work program that
2 would provide employment doing climate resilience and adaptation work. The climate corps would
3 be developed and administered by ServeRI.
4 This act would take effect upon passage.

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