

2024 -- H 7019

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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2024

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A N A C T

RELATING TO EDUCATION -- CURRICULUM

Introduced By: Representatives Spears, McNamara, Fogarty, Speakman, Cotter, Shanley,
Craven, Dawson, Finkelman, and Casimiro

Date Introduced: January 05, 2024

Referred To: House Education

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Chapter 16-22 of the General Laws entitled "Curriculum [See Title 16
2 Chapter 97 — the Rhode Island Board of Education Act]" is hereby amended by adding thereto the
3 following section:

4 **16-22-39. Workplace readiness week.**

5 (a) One week of every year in the month of April shall be known as "workplace readiness
6 week." All public high schools, including charter schools, shall annually observe that week by
7 providing information to pupils on their rights as workers. The topics covered shall include, but are
8 not limited to, all the following:

9 (1) Local, state, and federal laws regarding each of the following issues:

10 (i) Prohibitions against misclassification of employees as independent contractors;

11 (ii) Child labor;

12 (iii) Wage and hour protections;

13 (iv) Worker safety;

14 (v) Workers' compensation;

15 (vi) Unemployment insurance;

16 (vii) Paid sick leave, paid family leave, and state disability insurance;

17 (viii) The right to organize a union in the workplace;

18 (ix) Prohibitions against retaliation by employers when workers exercise these or any other
19 rights guaranteed by law.

1 (2) The labor movement’s role in winning the protections and benefits described in
2 subsections (a)(1)(i) through (ix), inclusive, of this section.

3 (3) An introduction to state-approved apprenticeship programs in Rhode Island, how to
4 access them, the variety of programs available, and how they can provide an alternative career path
5 for those who do not attend college.

6 (b) For pupils in grades eleven (11) and twelve (12), the observances required by this
7 section shall be integrated into the regular school program, consistent with the history-social
8 science framework, but may also include special events after regular school hours. This integration
9 is encouraged, but not required, to occur during workplace readiness week.

10 (c)(1) Beginning August 1, 2025, any minor seeking the signature of a verifying authority
11 on a statement of intent to employ a minor and request for a work permit-certificate of age under
12 this chapter shall be issued, before or at the time of receiving the signature of the verifying
13 authority, a document clearly explaining basic labor rights extended to workers.

14 (2) Topics covered in this document shall include, but are not limited to, those identified
15 in subsections (a)(1)(i) through (ix), inclusive, of this section.

16 (3) The department of labor and training is encouraged to produce, with input from bona
17 fide labor organizations, a draft template for the document to be provided to minors, including
18 translations into other languages, including, but not limited to, Spanish. The draft template shall be
19 consistent with § 28-3-3, ("issuance of limited permission for work by children").

20 (4) The document shall express these labor rights in plain, natural terminology easily
21 understood by the pupil.

22 (5) The document shall be in a physical form in English and shall include both a uniform
23 resource locator (URL) for, and a quick response code linked to, an Internet website with electronic
24 versions of the document, and any translated versions of the document, produced by the department
25 of labor and training, pursuant to subsection (c)(3) of this section.

26 (d) Each school superintendent shall annually send a written notice, detailing requirements
27 of workplace readiness week and how teachers may access related instructional materials and other
28 resources, to every public high school, including charter schools, at least one month before
29 workplace readiness week.

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

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EXPLANATION
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
OF
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RELATING TO EDUCATION -- CURRICULUM

1 This act would establish a "workplace readiness week". It would require all public high
2 schools, including charter schools, to annually observe that week by providing information to
3 students on their rights as workers and would specify the topics that must be covered.

4 This act would take effect upon passage.

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