SENATE RESOLUTION
RESPECTFULLY REQUESTING THAT THE RHODE ISLAND DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION DEVELOP A SET OF KEY ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE PRINCIPLES AND CONCEPTS TO BE INFUSED IN ALL SUBJECTS FOR K-12 PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENTS

Introduced By: Senators Lawson, Euer, Sosnowski, Valverde, and Lynch Prata
Date Introduced: February 27, 2020
Referred To: Senate Education

WHEREAS, The evidence for human-induced climate change is overwhelming and undeniable; and
WHEREAS, The heaviest burden of climate change will fall on the next generation; and
WHEREAS, Nearly 10,000 students graduate from Rhode Island high schools each year, armed with attitudes, skills, and knowledge about the climate that inform their actions; and
WHEREAS, The effects on the climate, positive or negative, of each of those 10,000 students lasts beyond a lifetime; and
WHEREAS, Students need to be prepared to implement changes in professional and personal practices, to support and help develop new technology and policy, and to address the coming social and economic challenges and opportunities arising from a changing climate; and
WHEREAS, It is thus essential that each of these graduates are climate literate; and
WHEREAS, According to the Yale Program on Climate Change Communications, over 76 percent of the people in Rhode Island support teaching students about the causes, consequences, and potential solutions to climate change; and
WHEREAS, According to the National Center for Science Education, 86 percent of teachers in the United States feel that climate change should be taught in schools; and
WHEREAS, Only thirty percent of middle school and forty-five percent of high school science teachers nationally, understand the extent of the scientific consensus on climate change;
WHEREAS, The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), signed into law in 2015, names environmental education as part of a well-rounded education, and allows federal funding from ESSA to be used to introduce or expand environmental education in school districts; and

WHEREAS, The National Science Teaching Association, the National Association of Geoscience Teachers, the National Association of Biology Teachers, and other professional organizations have called for greater support for science educators in teaching climate science and climate change; and

WHEREAS, The Resilient Rhody Report recommends that K-12 Education be expanded to include education on environmental literacy, including climate-related emergency preparedness, by developing resources for school use and identifying how these concepts can be incorporated into existing state standards; and

WHEREAS, The students in Rhode Island have requested that climate change education be included in the curriculum; and

WHEREAS, The impact of climate change and the urgency and magnitude of the challenge of addressing climate change will soon fall on current students; now, therefore be it

RESOLVED, That this Senate of the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations hereby requests that the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE), in consultation with a wide representation from the environmental and climate education community, develop a set of key environmental and climate principles and concepts which should be infused into all subjects throughout K-12, develop learning standards for the same, and ensure that all teacher professional development includes these principles and concepts; and be it further

RESOLVED, That this Senate hereby urges all elementary and secondary public schools including middle schools, or any other schools managed and controlled by the state, to offer as part of the curriculum, courses in climate and environmental literacy; and be it further

RESOLVED, That this Senate hereby urges the Rhode Island Department of Education to ensure that teacher professional development in Rhode Island in the Common Core State Standards and in the Next Generation Science Standards use climate as an exemplary anchor phenomenon; and be it further

RESOLVED, That this Senate respectfully urges the Rhode Island Department of Education to make available on its website, curriculum materials and such other materials as may assist local and regional school committees in developing instructional programs in climate and environmental literacy. RIDE shall consult with practicing teachers, principals, superintendents and experts when making such curriculum and other materials available. The curriculum and
materials selected shall be aligned with state standards and assessments and contain sufficient
detail to guide teachers in planning lessons aligned with state standards and assessments; and be it
further

RESOLVED, That the Secretary of State be and hereby is authorized and directed to
transmit a duly certified copy of this resolution to Ms. Barbara S. Cottam, Chair, Rhode Island
Board of Education.

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