

2014 -- H 7673

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LC003857
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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2014

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A N A C T

RELATING TO EDUCATION - HEALTH AND SAFETY OF PUPILS

Introduced By: Representatives McNamara, Naughton, Ferri, Shekarchi, and Hull

Date Introduced: February 27, 2014

Referred To: House Health, Education & Welfare

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Findings of fact. The general assembly hereby funds and declares as
2 follows:

3 (1) One of the greatest natural features and resources of the state of Rhode Island is its
4 beautiful coastline that provides scenic, panoramic views, and access to numerous pristine
5 beaches and water activities in Narragansett Bay and beyond; and

6 (2) Rhode Island has approximately two hundred eighty-four (284) miles of tidal
7 shoreline and thirty five (35) islands in its territorial waters; and

8 (3) With such prominent access to the water throughout the state, water safety is an
9 essential matter that should not be overlooked; and

10 (4) According to the centers for disease control, approximately ten (10) people die from
11 unintentional drowning every day, and that drowning ranks fifth (5th) among the leading causes of
12 unintentional injury death in the United States; and

13 (5) About one in five (5) people who die from drowning are children fourteen (14) and
14 younger, and for every child who dies from drowning, another five (5) receive emergency
15 department care for nonfatal submersion injuries; and

16 (6) The general assembly declares that requiring instruction in water safety in public
17 schools would be in the best interests of the state as such instruction would help promote
18 widespread water safety and reduce the occurrence of water-related fatalities and accidents.

19 SECTION 2. Chapter 16-21 of the General Laws entitled "Health and Safety of Pupils" is

1 hereby amended by adding thereto the following section:

2 **16-21-35. Water safety instruction.** – (a) Water safety training. All schools required to
3 have a school health program pursuant to § 16-21-7 or a health and physical education program
4 pursuant to § 16-22-4 shall incorporate within one or both of said programs age-appropriate
5 instruction and materials relating to water safety.

6 (b) Nothing in this section shall prohibit any school department that has a pool or access
7 to a pool from mandating that students pass a swimming test as a part of their physical education
8 requirement to graduate.

9 SECTION 3. This act shall take effect upon passage.

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EXPLANATION
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
OF
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RELATING TO EDUCATION - HEALTH AND SAFETY OF PUPILS

- 1 This act would direct most Rhode Island schools to incorporate instruction in water safety
- 2 as a part of either their health program or physical education program, or both.
- 3 This act would take effect upon passage.

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