



RHODE ISLAND  
FEDERATION OF TEACHERS AND  
HEALTH PROFESSIONALS <sup>AFT</sup><sub>AFL - CIO</sub>

May 17, 2016

Senator Hanna Gallo, Chair  
Senate Education Committee  
RI General Assembly  
82 Smith St.  
Providence, RI 02903

Re: K-5 Recess, 2016-S 2669 and 2016-H 7644

Dear Senator:

The RIFTHP did not testify at the Senate Education hearing on Senator Coyne's bill. Since the hearing, I have had an opportunity to talk to a number of our teacher leaders in the RIFTHP who have identified several serious concerns about the proposed legislation.

As I have previously mentioned, the RIFTHP objects to statutory language that prevents a teacher from withholding recess as a matter of discipline. We do not believe the Assembly should create a statutory right to recess for all students. Rather, the Assembly should respect the professional judgement of the state's classroom teachers.

Two additional issues have been identified related to the proposed bill. I know of at least one school district that includes the 5<sup>th</sup> grade in its middle school and does not provide recess to those 5<sup>th</sup> grade students. If this bill were to pass, it needs to be amended to only apply to elementary school students so as not to disrupt existing middle school schedules.

Since Board of Education regulations require 330 minutes of daily instructional time, passage of this bill will require several school districts to increase the length of their school day. This may trigger changes in bus schedules, student and teacher schedules, and collective bargaining over the length of teacher and staff workdays. In order to avoid these consequences, please consider amending the bill to define recess as instructional time.

Attached are proposed amendments for your review. Thank you for considering the teacher perspective related to the above-captioned bills.

Sincerely,

James Parisi

cc: Senator Cynthia Coyn

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LC005271

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND  
IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2016  
AN ACT  
RELATING TO EDUCATION -- CURRICULUM -- FREE PLAY RECESS

Introduced By: Senators Coyne, Sosnowski, Archambault, Goldin, and DiPalma  
Date Introduced: March 8, 2016  
Referred To: Senate Education

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Findings. - The General Assembly finds as follows:

2 (1) Free play time increasing learning outcomes for students; and

3 (2) The department of elementary and secondary education aspires to offer our children

4 the opportunities to participate in recess; and

5 ~~(3) The legislature recognizes recess as a right for our youngest learners.~~

6 SECTION 2. Chapter 16-22 of the General Laws entitled "Curriculum [See Title 16

7 Chapter 97 - The Rhode Island Board of Education Act]" is hereby amended by adding thereto

8 the following section:

9 16-22-4.2. Free play recess. -- All children in grades kindergarten through five (5)

10 attending public elementary schools, or any other elementary schools managed and controlled by the state, shall

11 receive in those schools one hundred (100) minutes of supervised, safe, and unstructured free-play recess

12 each week so that there are at least twenty (20) consecutive minutes of free-play recess per day.

13 Free-play recess may not be withheld for academic or punitive reasons, and is in addition to the

14 requirements set forth in §16-22-4. Notwithstanding any law or regulation to the contrary, recess

15 shall be considered instructional time. As used herein, the term "free play" means an unstructured

16 environment, but which is supervised by appropriate school personnel or staff.

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

EXPLANATION  
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL OF  
AN ACT  
RELATING TO EDUCATION -- CURRICULUM -- FREE PLAY RECESS

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1 This act would require public schools to provide students in grades kindergarten through five (5) with at least  
2 twenty (20) minutes of free-play recess each school day.

This act would take effect upon passage.

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