



**NEW ENGLAND STATE PROPOSED LEGISLATION ON  
HIGHER EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT  
Legislative Session and Bill Summary**

*Last updated: September 19, 2019*

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## Connecticut General Assembly

**Budget:** Connecticut lawmakers ended their session and sent a balanced budget of \$43 billion for FY20 and FY21. Democrats, who hold a majority in both legislative branches, said the budget erases a deficit without raising tax rates.

**Taxes:** Democrats in the General Assembly were unsuccessful in their push to tax the wealthiest Connecticut residents on investment income. While this effort fizzled in the 2019 session, it may come up in the future as state finances continue to be a balancing act. Without adjustments to the new budget, the state stands to be in the hole for a projected \$3.7 billion. If revenue projections hold up, by September 30, the state will add \$2 billion to the rainy day fund and possibly an additional \$900 million over the course of the biennium. Spending growth is limited by a state spending cap passed in 1991 in response to Connecticut voters who were outraged that a new state income tax was adopted. Under the cap, spending growth is limited to 1.7% in FY20 and to 3.4% in FY21.

The budget closes a \$3.7 billion hole by passing additional taxes and fees and eliminating sales tax exemptions on several services. New sales tax items include interior design, ridesharing services, parking, alcohol, and laundry and dry cleaning services. The legislature raised the rate on digital downloads via platforms such as Netflix and Hulu from 1 percent to 6.25 percent. It imposed a 1 percent sales tax surcharge on restaurant food and other prepared meals.

The budget also calls for raising business filing fees from \$25 to \$60 while eliminating the \$business entity fee to help employers adjust to the gradual increase in the minimum wage and a new paid family and medical leave plan. However, a \$250 fee paid once every two years, and other tax credit changes are estimated to cost small and mid-sized business more than \$50 million annually. Car dealers will be required to pay a \$100 fee for trade-in vehicles, up from \$35. Plastic shopping bags will be taxed at 10 cents per bag and banned outright after two years.

**Savings:** Also, built into the new two-year spending plan are estimated savings, which target the state pension fund and state employee healthcare costs. Contributions to the state pension fund will increase but at a slower rate. Healthcare costs will be reduced without employees losing benefits. Incentives include negotiating with providers for less costly health insurance plans and negotiating discounts for health care services and prescription drugs. Budget writers estimate \$181.5 million in savings from these two areas.

**Paid Family and Medical Leave:** Connecticut joins California, Massachusetts, New York, New Jersey, and the District of Columbia in approving paid family and medical leave. In doing so, lawmakers approved what appears to be the most generous program in the country. The bill provides for 12 weeks of paid leave over 12 months. Employees will fund the program by contributing 0.5% of their income through a mandatory payroll tax. State employees who belong to unions are exempt. Should there be inadequate funding for the program, benefits will be reduced.

**Minimum Wage:** The increase in the minimum wage will begin in October 2019, when it goes from \$10.10 to \$11 per hour. In each successive year, the minimum wage will increase by \$1 until 2023 when it reaches \$15 per hour. While advocates say this is an overdue lift for low-wage workers, small businesses in Connecticut say this is an ill-considered blow in a state that has yet to fully recover from the Great Recession of 2008.

**School Choice:** After years of flat funding of magnet schools, these regional schools that aim to offer integrated classrooms for minority city youth will receive a 2% boost in state aid. Both magnet and charter schools also received increased funding so more students can enroll.

**Free College:** The legislature endorsed a plan to provide cost-free community college to first-time students regardless of their income starting in the fall of 2020. However, funding for the program hinges on approval of online lottery sales. The governor must meet with the Connecticut Lottery Corporation and request that a determination be made to offer lottery games online or through a mobile application.

Rep. Gregg Haddad, a NEBHE delegate and chief proponent of the program maintains if done right, this initiative could increase enrollment at the state's community colleges. The Connecticut General Assembly's Office of Fiscal Affairs estimates that the program would bring in \$2.1 million to \$7.7 million in federal aid and other financial assistance provided to students during FY21, depending on how many additional students enroll. The number of eligible students could range from 10% to 45% from the previous year. States with similar programs, such as Rhode Island, Tennessee and Oregon saw enrollments increase.

**Computer and IT Curricula:** Gov. Lamont also signed into law a bill from Sen. James Maroney to make Connecticut the first state in the nation to require teacher-preparation programs to include instruction in how to teach coding and programming in their existing computer and information technology skills curriculum. The legislation (SB 957) also requires the Connecticut Department of Education to create an endorsement and certification in teaching computer science and calls on the Connecticut Office of Higher Education to work with the Department of Education to develop an alternative route to certification program for computer science teachers to include mentored apprenticeships and program admission criteria. Sen. Maroney's legislation will be a topic for discussion at the fall 2019 meeting of NEBHE's Legislative Advisory Committee on which he sits.

**Among other highlights, lawmakers passed legislation to:**

- Increase in the minimum wage to \$15 by 2023.
- Establish paid family and medical leave program
- Increase in the age to purchase tobacco products from 18 to 21. Businesses flouting the law can be fined up to \$300 and subsequent offenses can reach up to \$1,000. *(Tobacco use remains the leading cause of preventable deaths in the state.)*
- Provide free tuition for community college students
- Allow qualified undocumented college students access to a form of financial aid
- Provide for a cost-of-living wage for nonprofit social workers
- Extend the time for reporting sexual harassment to employers.

**Lawmakers rejected efforts to:**

- Legalize marijuana sales
- Import prescription drugs *(Senate failed to take up a House-passed bill to provide a federal waiver for Connecticut to be the fourth state in the U.S. to import prescription drugs)*
- Allow sports betting *(no agreement was reached between the governor and the Mashantucket Pequot and Mohegan tribes which would have allowed them and other groups to offer sports betting in the state)*
- Introduce highway tolls

**Education and Workforce Bills Passed (\* indicates NEBHE LAC and/or Board Member):**

**H.B. 5833**

**Public Act No. 19-103**

**AN ACT EXPANDING ADVANCED MANUFACTURING CERTIFICATE PROGRAMS AT REGIONAL COMMUNITY-TECHNICAL COLLEGES**

Sponsors: House Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee, Rep. Kara Rochelle (D), Rep. Michael Winkler (D), Rep. Nicole Klarides-Ditria (R), Rep. Robyn Porter (D), Rep. Themis Klarides (R), Rep. Joshua Elliot (D), Rep. Anne Hughes (D), Rep. James Rojas (D), Rep. David Michel (D), Rep. Joshua Hall (D), Rep. Jason Doucette (D), Rep. Mary Mushinsky (D), Sen. George Logan (R), Rep. Robin Comey (D), Sen. Joan Hartley (D), Rep. Raghiv Allie-Brennan (D), Rep. Robert Sanchez (D), Rep. Rick Lopes (D), Rep. John Hennessy (D), Rep. Jane Garibay (D), Rep. Maria Horn (D), Rep. Jonathan Steinberg (D), Rep. Christine Conley (D), Rep. Kerry Szeps Wood (D), Rep. Terrie Wood (R), Rep. Joseph Gresko (D), Rep. Tami Zawistowski (R), Rep. Kate Rotella (D), Rep. Holly Cheeseman (R), Rep. Bill Simanski (R), Rep. John Hampton (D), Rep. Tom Delnicki (R), Rep. Mitch Bolinsky (R), Rep. David Rutigliano (R), Rep. Timothy Ackert (R), Rep. Tom O’Dea (R), Rep. Charles Ferraro (R), Rep. Irene Haines (R), Rep. Devin Carney (R), Rep. Kathleen McCarty (R), Rep. Matt Blumenthal (D), Rep. Catherine Abercrombie (D), Rep. Whit Betts, Rep. William Petit (R), Rep. Charlie Stallworth (D), Rep. Anthony D’Amelio (R), Rep. Hilda Santiago (D), Rep. Henry Genga (D), Rep. Pat Wilson Pheanious (D), Rep. Olivia Floren (R), Rep. Noreen Kokoruda (R), Rep. Joseph Verrengia (D), Rep. Caroline Simmons (D), Rep. Jesse MacLachlan (R), Rep. Christie Carpino (R), Rep. Douglas Dubitsky (R), Sen. Marilyn Moore (D), Rep. Christine Pavalock-D’Amato (R), Sen. Gennaro Bizzarro (R), Sen. Heather Bond Somers (R), Sen. Saud Anwar (D), Sen. Robert Sampson (R), Sen. Norman Needleman (D), Sen. Catherine Osten (D), Sen. Kevin Kelly (R), Sen. Alexandra Bergstein (D), Rep. Brandon McGee (D), Sen. Mary Daugherty Abrams (D), Sen. Julie Kushner (D), Rep. Joseph Serra (D), Sen. Carlo Leone (D)

To increase accessibility to advanced manufacturing certificate programs and meet industry demand for skilled workforce.

*Status: Passed July 1, 2019; Signed by governor*

**H.B. 7104**

**Public Act No. 19-137**

**AN ACT CONCERNING ADOPTION OF THE CONNECTICUT UNIFORM TRUST CODE**

Sponsors: House Judiciary Committee, Rep. Rosa Rebimbas (R), Rep. Steven Stafstrom (D), Sen. Heather Bond Somers (R), Rep. Joseph Serra (D), Sen. Gennaro Bizzarro (R)

To modernize Connecticut trust law in order to allow the state to remain economically competitive, create jobs and retain businesses in the state.

*Status: Passed July 12, 2019; Signed by governor*

**H.B. 7248**

**Public Act No. 19-172**

**AN ACT CONCERNING IN-STATE STUDENT STATUS FOR SPOUSES AND CHILDREN OF CERTAIN MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES**

Sponsors: House Veterans' Affairs Committee, Sen. Saud Anwar (D), Rep. Timothy Ackert (R), Rep. Charles Ferraro (R), Rep. Bob Godfrey (D), Rep. Patricia Miller (D), Rep. Devin Carney (R), Rep. Emil Altobello (D), Rep. David Rutigliano (R), Rep. Laura Devlin (R), Rep. Brenda Kupchick (R), Rep. Olivia Floren (R), Rep. Hilda Santiago (D), Rep. Kara Rochelle (D), Rep. Mitch Bolinsky (R), Rep. Tom Delnicki (R), Rep. Fred Camillo (R), Rep. Joe Polletta (R), Rep. William Petit (R), Rep. Stephanie Cummings (R), Rep. Matt Blumenthal (D), Sen. Heather Bond Somers (R), Sen. George Logan (R), Rep. Joseph Serra (D)

To allow spouses and children of certain members of the armed forces to be deemed in-state students for the purposes of certain tuition charges.

*Status: Passed July 12, 2019; Signed by governor*

**H.B. 7253**

**Public Act No. 19-174**

**AN ACT CONCERNING DISTANCE LEARNING PROGRAMS OPERATED BY INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION OUTSIDE OF THE STATE**

Sponsors: House Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee, Rep. Bobby Gibson (D), Rep. David Michel (D), Rep. Hilda Santiago (D), Rep. Larry Butler (D), Rep. Andre Baker (D), Rep. Geraldo Reyes (D), Rep. Gregg Haddad (D)\*, Sen. Heather Bond Somers (R)

To allow out-of-state institutions of higher education that do not participate in a nation-wide, state authorization reciprocity agreement to apply to the Office of Higher Education to operate a distance learning program in the state.

*Status: Passed July 9, 2019; Signed by governor*

**S.B. 26**

**Public Act No. 19-26**

**AN ACT MAKING PERMANENT THE MORATORIUM ON THE APPROVAL OF PROGRAMS AT INDEPENDENT INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION**

Sponsors: House Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee, Sen. Martin Looney (D), Sen. Leonard Fasano (R), Rep. Cristin McCarthy Vahey (D), Rep. Dave Yaccarino (R), Rep. Steven Stafstrom (D), Rep. Jillian Gilchrest (D), Rep. Henry Genga (D), Rep. Brenda Kupchick (R), Rep. Julio Concepcion (D), Rep. Joseph Gresko (D), Sen. George Logan (R), Sen. Tony Hwang (R), Sen. Paul Formica (R), Sen. Heather Bond Somers (R), Rep. Devin Carney (R), Rep. Robyn Porter (D), Rep. David Rutigliano (R), Rep. Joseph Serra (D)

To permanently allow independent institutions of higher education to create up to twelve new programs of higher learning in any academic year and any program modifications without the approval of the Office of Higher Education.

*Status: Passed June 21, 2019; Signed by governor*

**S.B. 81**

**Public Act No. 19-87**

**AN ACT MAKING CERTAIN INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND PRIVATE OCCUPATIONAL SCHOOLS INELIGIBLE FOR PUBLIC FUNDS AND LICENSURE**

Sponsors: House Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee, Sen. Matthew Lesser (D), Rep. Arthur O'Neill (R), Rep. Kenneth Gucker (D)

To prevent for-profit colleges and occupational schools that require students to waive certain rights, as a condition of enrollment, from receiving public funds or licensure from the Office of Higher Education.

*Status: Passed July 8, 2019; Signed by governor*

**S.B. 607**

**Public Act No. 19-13**

**AN ACT CONCERNING APPRENTICESHIP PATHWAYS TO EARNING A BACHELOR'S DEGREE**

Sponsors: House Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee, Sen. James Maroney (D), Sen. Tony Hwang (R), Rep. Kim Rose (D), Rep. Josh Hampton (D), Rep. Henry Genga (D), Rep. Bob Godfrey (D), Rep. Olivia Floren (R), Rep. Devin Carney (R), Rep. Timothy Ackert (R), Rep. William Buckbee (R), Rep. Jesse MacLachlan (R), Rep. Tammy Exum (D), Rep. David Ruligliano (R), Rep. Anthony D'Amelio (R), Rep. Geraldo Reyes (D), Rep. Patricia Miller (D), Rep. Rosa Rebimbas (R), Rep. Hilda Santiago (D), Rep. Larry Butler (D), Rep. Pat Wilson Pheanious (D), Sen. Saud Anwar (D), Sen. Norman Needleman (D), Sen. Catherine Osten (D), Sen. Alexandra Bergstein (D), Rep. Brandon McGee (D), Rep. Patricia Dillon (D), Sen. Mary Daughtery Abrams (D), Sen. Julie Kushner (D), Rep. Joseph Serra (D), Sen. Mae Flexer (D)\*, Sen. Gennaro Bizzarro (R), Sen. Carlo Leone (D)

To establish a non-traditional pathway to earning a bachelor's degree, which incorporates apprenticeships.

*Status: Passed June 21, 2019; Signed by governor*

**S.B. 745**

**Public Act No. 19-7**

**AN ACT REQUIRING A FEASIBILITY STUDY ON THE ESTABLISHMENT OF AN ENVIRONMENTAL AGRICULTURAL PROGRAM AT PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION**

Sponsors: House Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee, Sen. Heather Bond Somers (R), Rep. Terrie Wood (R), Sen. Kevin Kelly (R), Rep. Tom Delnicki (R), Rep. William Buckbee (R), Rep. Kim Rose (D), Rep. Tami Zawistowski (R), Rep. Douglas Dubitsky (R), Rep. Charles Stallworth (D), Sen. Saud Anwar (D), Sen. George Logan (R)

To require the Board of Regents for Higher Education to conduct a feasibility study on the establishment of computer programming programs related to the controlled environment agricultural industry and the construction of highly technical greenhouses at the regional community-technical colleges.

*Status: Passed June 21, 2019; Signed by governor*

**S.B. 854**

**Public Act No. 19-58**

**AN ACT PROMOTING CAREERS IN MANUFACTURING TO PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENTS AND ESTABLISHING A TASK FORCE TO STUDY THE DEMAND FOR CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION TEACHERS**

Sponsors: House Commerce Committee, Rep. Joseph Gresko (D), Rep. Dorinda Keenan Borer (D), Rep. Edwin Vargas (D), Rep. Christine Conley (D), Rep. Lucy Dathan (D), Rep. Robin Green (R), Rep. Holly Cheeseman (R), Rep. Tom Delnicki (R), Rep. William Buckbee (R), Rep. Kim Rose (D), Rep. David Michel (D), Rep. Catherine Abercrombie (D), Rep. Irene Haines (R), Rep. Tami Zawistowski (R), Rep. Jane Gariby (D), Rep. Jesse MacLachlan (R), Rep. Tammy Exum (D), Sen. Saud Anwar (D), Sen. Robert Sampson (R), Sen. Kevin Kelly (R), Sen. George Logan (R), Sen. Gennaro Bizzarro (R)

To (1) require guidance counselors and school counselors to provide materials concerning manufacturing, military and law enforcement careers to students; (2) require local and regional school district boards of education to develop goals for career placement for students choosing not to pursue an advanced degree; (3) include manufacturing employment and certificate program rates in the accountability index; and (4) establish a task force to study demand for career and technical education teachers in the state.

*Status: Passed June 26, 2019; Signed by governor*

**S.B. 951**

**Public Act No. 19-62**

**AN ACT CONCERNING VETERAN ENROLLMENT IN CERTAIN ALTERNATE ROUTE TO CERTIFICATION PROGRAMS**

Sponsors: House Veterans' Affairs Committee, Sen. Saud Anwar (D), Rep. Robert Sanchez (D), Rep. Tom Delnicki (R), Rep. Robin Green (R), Rep. Kim Rose (D), Rep. Kara Rochelle (D), Rep. William Buckbee (R), Rep. David Michel (D), Rep. Catherine Abercrombie (D), Rep. Whet Betts (R), Rep. Stephanie Cummings (R), Rep. Hilda Santiago (D), Rep. Jesse MacLachlan (R), Sen. Kevin Witkos (R), Rep. Geraldo Reyes (D), Rep. Kathy Kennedy (R), Sen. George Logan (R), Sen. Norman Needleman (D), Sen. Catherine Osten (D), Sen. Alexandra Bergstein (D), Rep. Patricia Dillon (D), Sen. Mary Daugherty Abrams (D), Rep. Joseph Serra (D), Sen. Carlo Leone (D)

To require fifteen per cent of available seats in certain alternate route to certification programs to be reserved for veterans.

*Status: Passed June 28, 2019; Signed by governor*

**S.B. 957**

**Public Act No. 19-128**

**AN ACT CONCERNING COMPUTER SCIENCE INSTRUCTION IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

Sponsors: House Education Committee, Sen. Kevin Witkos (R), Rep. Robert Sanchez (D), Rep. John Hampton (D), Rep. Christine Pavalock-D'Amato (R), Sen. James Maroney (D)\*, Rep. Caroline Simmons (D), Rep. Jesse MacLachlan (R), Rep. Tammy Exum (D), Rep. Jason Doucette (D), Rep. William Buckbee (R), Rep. Dave Yaccarino (R), Rep. Christopher Davis (R), Rep. Kenneth Gucker (D), Rep. Patricia Miller (D), Rep. Hilda Santiago (D), Rep. Kathy Kennedy (R), Sen. Norman Needleman (D), Sen. Catherine Osten (D), Sen. Kevin Kelly (R), Sen. Alexandra Bergstein (D), Sen. George Logan (R), Rep. Matt Blumenthal (D), Sen. Carlo Leone (D), Sen. Derek Slap (D), Rep. Kathleen McCarty (R)

To include computer science instruction in the public school curriculum, programs of teacher preparation and in-service training programs for teachers.

*Status: Passed July 12, 2019; Signed by governor*

**S.B. 1018**

**Public Act No. 19-130**

**AN ACT CONCERNING THE OPPORTUNITY GAP**

Sponsors: House Education Committee, Sen. Heather Bond Somers (R), Rep. Robert Sanchez (D), Rep. Larry Butler (D), Sen. Kevin Witkos (R),

To withhold or impose restrictions on the use of certain education grants on certain school districts that are not experiencing academic improvement, and to include the collection of student outcome data relating to college and career readiness in the state-wide public school information system.

*Status: Passed July 12, 2019; Signed by governor*

**S.B. 1130**

**Public Act No. 19-154**

**AN ACT CONCERNING VARIOUS INITIATIVES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CONNECTICUT AND PRIORITY FOR GRANTS-IN-AID FROM THE HIGHER EDUCATION ENTREPRENEURSHIP ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

Sponsors: House Finance, Revenue, and Bonding Committee, Rep. Charlie Stallworth (D)

To require The University of Connecticut to undertake initiatives emphasizing entrepreneurship to assist in the economic development of the state and educating students to meet the state's present and projected future workforce needs.

*Status: Passed June 28, 2019; Signed by governor*

## Maine State Legislature

**Budget:** Maine lawmakers passed a two-year budget of \$8 billion for FY20 and FY21. The budget contains no tax increases or tax cuts. Senate Majority Leader Nate Libby (D-Lewiston) noted the budget committee cast more than 1,100 votes on budget line items with 99% being unanimous. The budget was the first for new Democratic Gov. Janet Mills who kept her promise to fund the expansion of Medicaid.

**Healthcare, Social Services:** The budget funds \$125 million to expand Medicaid (Maine Care) for 70,000 eligible Mainers, as approved by voters in 2016. It also funds expansion of the Drugs for the Elderly program to 800 additional seniors and provides funding for 48 new positions and a new unit at the Dorothea Dix Psychiatric Center in Bangor.

It increases funding by \$5.5 million for opioid and drug prevention programs from the Fund for a Healthy Maine for prevention efforts. Also funding will increase for the weekly rate for medication-assisted treatment and the 24-month limit for medication-assisted treatment will be eliminated.

For child protection services, the budget adds 62 new child protection workers and funds \$3 million for Child Development Services, which includes early intervention for young children.

**K-12:** Lawmakers approved an increase of \$111 million for K-12 education and increased the state's share of funding for K-12 to 51%.

They also approved legislation sponsored by Sen. Rebecca Millet, Senate Chair of the Joint Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs, to increase the minimum pay for teachers to \$40,000 over three-year period and setting aside funds for local school districts to meet the increases.

Maine also expanded eligibility for children for free school breakfast and lunch.

**Higher education:** The budget increases base funding for the University of Maine System by 3%, or about \$18 million. Lawmakers also invested \$3.1 million to expand the Early College programs and reduce student debt. An additional \$4.1 million is slated to be invested in the Adult Degree Completion program.

Lawmakers also passed a student loan bill of rights to regulate student loan services (LD 995). The legislation protects borrowers and makes loan servicing companies accountable, especially those companies that have used predatory practices to hit Maine borrowers with unnecessary fees, high interest rates, and, in some instances, default.

**Cities, towns and homeowners:** Maine's cities and towns will receive an additional \$75 million for municipal revenue sharing. Also, \$4.1 million was allocated for broadband expansion and rural development grants.

The Homestead Exemption will increase by \$5,000, allowing Maine residents to exempt \$25,000 from their property taxes without increasing the impact on local cities and towns.

**Tribal Nations:** Lawmakers passed and the governor signed legislation (LD 777) to establish a permanent commission on the status of racial indigenous and Maine tribal populations. The bill, sponsored by Rep. Rachel Talbot Ross of Portland, will provide a vehicle for the state's efforts to understand how policy decisions affect racial and ethnic groups.

**Misc.:** Maine lawmakers passed and the governor signed a number of bills to make prescription drugs more affordable for Maine residents, including one allowing prescription drugs to be imported from Canada (requires a federal waiver) and another to create a wholesale importation process for prescription drugs.

While other states in the nation passed several anti-abortion laws, Maine lawmakers approved several pro-abortion measures, including a bill to cover funding by the state's healthcare programs (MaineCare) for abortions. Also, legislation was passed to allow nurse practitioners and physician assistants to perform abortions. Another measure improves access to the "day after" pill, allowing it to be distributed in vending machines.

Maine joined California, Mississippi, New York, and West Virginia in requiring that all school-age children be vaccinated. Beginning in 2021, all students attending school and college in Maine must be vaccinated. Arguments citing side effects and religious beliefs were countered by health officials who pointed to an increasing number of unvaccinated children who are putting children at risk who are unable to be vaccinated due to medical reasons.

Maine lawmakers took passed legislation to adjust the tax code in order to ease the tax burden on low-income residents. Gov. Mills signed LD 1671, which will affect approximately 100,000 Maine households by more than doubling the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC). The bill also closes a loophole in the Maine Capital Investment Credit, which, to date, has provided big multistate corporations with greater benefits than Maine businesses that operate only in Maine.

The governor signed a net neutrality law, saying she is hopeful that such a law will "protect a free and open internet for Maine residents."

Lawmakers passed a bill to allow sports betting, but Gov. Mills put a hold on the bill expressing concerns about expanding gambling in the state. With the legislature adjourned, the bill will have to be reconsidered when lawmakers reconvene in January 2020.

Mills is seeking legislative approval for a \$238 million bonding package. The biggest bond is \$105 million for transportation including road and bridge repairs, expansion of broadband. The second largest bond is \$65 million for environmental protection with \$30 million going to the Land for Maine's Future Program. An additional \$20 million is slated for cleaning up hazardous-waste sites. Among other bonds, \$19 million is for workforce development, \$4 million for the Maine Community College System to support two mobile welding labs to train prospective welders, \$5 million to support career technical centers and \$5 million in childcare options for working Mainers.

The legislature approved a bill that switches Maine back to a presidential primary vote in March of next year.

The legislature did not reach agreement on how much the state should borrow to fix highways and bridges or build out a lagging broadband network. These were key infrastructure improvements that Gov. Mills had requested be sent to voters for approval this fall.

**Education and Workforce Bills Passed (\* indicates NEBHE LAC and/or Board Member):**

**H.B. 139**

**AN ACT TO ADDRESS THE UNMET WORKFORCE NEEDS OF EMPLOYERS AND TO IMPROVE THE ECONOMIC FUTURE OF WORKERS**

Sponsors: Rep. Mattie Daughtry (D)\*, Rep. Susan Austin (R), Sen. Shenna Bellows (D), Rep. James Handy (D), Rep. Norman Higgins (I), Rep. Brian Hubbell (D), Rep. Michael Sylvester (D)

An Act To Address the Unmet Workforce Needs of Employers and To Improve the Economic Future of Workers

*Status: Passed to be enacted, April 23, 2019*

**H.B. 206**

**AN ACT TO RAISE THE UNIVERSITY OF MAINE SYSTEM DEBT CEILING**

Sponsors: Rep. Michelle Dunphy (D), Sen. Catherine Breen (D), Sen. James Dill (D), Rep. Brian Hubbell (D), Rep. Erik Jorgensen (D), Rep. Victoria Kornfield (D)\*, Rep. John Martin (D), Rep. Matthew Moonen (D), Rep. Teresa Pierce (D), Rep. John Schneck (D)

An Act To Raise the University of Maine System Debt Ceiling

*Status: Passed to be enacted, June 18, 2019*

**H.B. 307**

**AN ACT TO LIMIT THE NUMBER OF CHARTER SCHOOLS IN MAINE**

Sponsors: Rep. Michael Brennan (D), Sen. Benjamin Chipman (D), Rep. Margaret Craven (D), Rep. Richard Farnsworth (D), Rep. Lori Gramlich (D), Rep. Victoria Kornfield (D)\*, Rep. David McCrea (D), Rep. Anne Perry (D), Rep. Lois Galgay Reckitt (D), Sen. Eloise Vitelli (D)

An Act To Limit the Number of Charter Schools in Maine

*Status: Passed to be enacted, June 3, 2019*

**H.B. 866**

**AN ACT TO SUPPORT COLLEGE COMPLETION BY HOMELESS YOUTH IN MAINE**

Sponsors: Rep. Michael Brennan (D), Sen. Everett Carson (D), Rep. Margaret Craven (D), Rep. Jeffrey Evangelos (I), Rep. Lori Gramlich (D), Rep. Erik Jorgensen (D), Rep. David McCrea (D), Rep. Victoria Morales (D), Rep. Anne Perry (D), Rep. Charlotte Warren (D)

An Act To Support College Completion by Homeless Youth in Maine

*Status: Passed to be enacted, June 18, 2019*

**H.B. 1247**

**RESOLVE, TO CLARIFY THE GOOD CAUSE AND SANCTION PROCESS IN THE TEMPORARY ASSISTANCE FOR NEEDY FAMILIES AND ADDITIONAL SUPPORT FOR PEOPLE IN RETRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS**

Sponsors: Sen. Rebecca Millett (D)\*, Rep. Victoria Kornfield (D)\*, Rep. Erik Jorgensen (D), Rep. Michelle Dunphy (D), Rep. Brian Hubbell (D), Rep. John Martin (D), Rep. Teresa Pierce (D), Rep. Harold Stewart (R)

Resolve, To Clarify the Good Cause and Sanction Process in the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families and Additional Support for People in Retraining and Employment Programs

*Status: Passed to be enacted, May 30, 2019*

**H.B. 1283**

**RESOLVE, TO ADVANCE COLLEGE AFFORDABILITY BY CONVENING A TASK FORCE TO RECOMMEND A SUSTAINABLE FUNDING MODEL FOR MAINTAINING MAINE'S PUBLIC HIGHER EDUCATION INFRASTRUCTURE**

Sponsors: Rep. Colleen Madigan (D), Rep. Benjamin Collings (D), Rep. Donna Doore (D), Rep. Richard Farnsworth (D), Sen. Geoffrey Gratwick (D), Rep. Patricia Hymanson (D), Rep. Joyce McCreight (D), Rep. Anne Perry (D), Rep. Denise Tepler (D), Rep. Ryan Tipping-Spitz (D)

Resolve, To Advance College Affordability by Convening a Task Force To Recommend a Sustainable Funding Model for Maintaining Maine's Public Higher Education Infrastructure

*Status: Passed to be enacted, June 6, 2019*

**H.B. 1342**

**AN ACT TO ESTABLISH THE MAINE WORKFORCE, RESEARCH, DEVELOPMENT AND STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT INSTITUTE**

Sponsors: Rep. Mattie Daughtry (D)\*

An Act To Establish the Maine Workforce, Research, Development and Student Achievement Institute

*Status: Passed to be enacted, June 20, 2019*

**H.B. 1382**

**RESOLVE, DIRECTING THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION TO STUDY AND DEVELOP A STATE PLAN FOR COMPUTER SCIENCE INSTRUCTION AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

Sponsors: Rep. Michael Brennan (D), Rep. Seth Berry (D), Rep. Margaret Craven (D), Rep. Diane Denk (D), Rep. Stephen Stanley (D)

Resolve, Directing the Department of Education To Study and Develop a State Plan for Computer Science Instruction and Professional Development

*Status: Passed to be enacted, June 6, 2019*

**H.B. 1538**

**RESOLVE, DIRECTING THE PUBLIC HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEMS COORDINATING COMMITTEE TO STUDY COMPENSATION EQUITY AMONG PUBLIC HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS**

Sponsors: Rep. Mattie Daughtry (D)\*

Resolve, Directing the Public Higher Education Systems Coordinating Committee To Study Compensation Equity among Public Higher Education Institutions

*Status: Passed to be enacted, May 29, 2019*

**H.B. 1593**

**AN ACT TO SUPPORT INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS IN SCHOOLS**

Sponsors: Rep. Matthew Pouliot (R)\*, Rep. Teresa Pierce (D), Rep. Richard Farnsworth (D), Rep. Brian Hubbell (D), Rep. Erik Jorgensen (D), Rep. Peter Lyford (R), Rep. Paul Stearns (R), Rep. Harold Stewart (R)

An Act To Support Infrastructure Improvements in Schools

*Status: Passed to be enacted, June 12, 2019*

**H.B. 1601**

**AN ACT TO AMEND THE LAWS GOVERNING THE EDUCATORS FOR MAINE PROGRAM**

Sponsors: Rep. Mattie Daughtry (D)\*, Sen. Rebecca Millet (D)\*, Rep. Ryan Fecteau (D), Rep. Teresa Pierce (D), Rep. Matthew Moonen (D)

An Act To Amend the Laws Governing the Educators for Maine Program

*Status: Passed to be enacted, June 6, 2019*

**H.B. 1685**

**AN ACT TO FACILITATE ENTRY OF IMMIGRANTS INTO THE WORKFORCE**

Sponsors: Rep. Mattie Daughtry (D)\*, Rep. Kristen Cloutier (D), Rep. Michael Brennan (D), Rep. Ryan Fecteau (D), Rep. James Handy (D), Rep. Thomas Harnett (D), Sen. Nathan Libby (D), Rep. Joseph Perry (D), Rep. Michael Sylvester (D), Rep. Denise Tepler (D)

An Act To Facilitate Entry of Immigrants into the Workforce

*Status: Passed to be enacted, June 19, 2019*

**S.B. 103**

**AN ACT TO ENSURE THE INTEGRITY OF FOR-PROFIT COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES**

Sponsors: Sen. Eloise Vitelli (D), Rep. Jeffrey Evangelos (I), Sen. Geoffrey Gratwick (D), Rep. Allison Hepler (D), Sen. Nathan Libby (D), Sen. Marrianna Moore (R), Rep. William Pluecker (I)

An Act To Ensure the Integrity of For-profit Colleges and Universities

*Status: Passed to be enacted, May 16, 2019*

**S.B. 440**

**AN ACT TO CONTINUE THE DOCTORS FOR MAINE'S FUTURE SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM**

Sponsors: Sen. Linda Sanborn (D), Sen. Geoffrey Gratwick (D), Sen. Erin Herbig (D), Rep. Teresa Pierce (D), Sen. Heather Sanborn (D)

An Act To Continue the Doctors for Maine's Future Scholarship Program

*Status: Passed to be enacted, June 20, 2019*

**S.B. 898**

**AN ACT TO PROVIDE FOR SUPPORT FOR NEW EDUCATORS**

Sponsors: Sen. Rebecca Millet (D)\*, Sen. Catherine Breen (D), Sen. Michael Carpenter (D), Sen. Ned Claxton (D), Rep. Janice Dodge (D), Rep. David McCrea (D), Rep. Teresa Pierce (D), Sen. Linda Sanborn (D), Sen. Eloise Vitelli (D)

An Act To Provide for Support for New Educators

*Status: Passed to be enacted, June 20, 2019*

**S.B. 995**

**AN ACT TO ESTABLISH A STUDENT LOAN BILL OF RIGHTS TO LICENSE AND REGULATE STUDENT LOAN SERVICERS**

Sponsors: Sen. Matthew Pouliot (R)\*, Sen. Eloise Vitelli (D), Rep. Michael Brennan (D), Sen. Robert Fraley (R), Sen. Nathan Libby (D), Sen. Heather Sanborn (D), Rep. Harold Stewart (R), Rep. Denise Tepler (D)

An Act To Establish a Student Loan Bill of Rights To License and Regulate Student Loan Servicers

*Status: Passed to be enacted, June 10, 2019*

**S.B. 1815**

**AN ACT TO PROVIDE FUNDS TO THE UNIVERSITY OF MAINE SYSTEM TO CONTINUE THE STATEWIDE ONLINE ADVANCED PLACEMENT COURSE PROGRAM**

Sponsors: Sen. Matthew Pouliot (R)\*

An Act To Provide Funds to the University of Maine System to Continue the Statewide Online Advanced Placement Course Program

*Status: Passed to be enacted, June 19, 2019*

**S.B. 1273**

**AN ACT TO ENSURE FUNDING FOR CERTAIN ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MAINE COOPERATIVE EXTENSION PESTICIDE SAFETY EDUCATION PROGRAM**

Sponsors: Sen. Russell Black (R), Sen. Michael Carpenter (D), Sen. William Diamond (D), Rep. Gary Drinkwater (R), Rep. Michelle Dunphy (D), Rep. Randall Hall (R), Sen. Louis Luchini (D), Rep. Thomas Skolfield (R), Rep. Stephen Stanley (D)

An Act To Ensure Funding for Certain Essential Functions of the University of Maine Cooperative Extension Pesticide Safety Education Program

*Status: Passed to be enacted, June 5, 2019*

**S.B. 1566**

**RESOLVE, TO DETERMINE WAYS TO INCREASE THE NUMBER OF RECIPIENTS UNDER THE TUITION WAIVER PROGRAM FOR PARTICIPANTS IN FOSTER CARE**

Sponsors: Sen. Russell Black (R), Sen. Paul Davis (R), Sen. Marianne Moore (R), Rep. Stephen Stanley (D)

Resolve, To Determine Ways To Increase the Number of Recipients under the Tuition Waiver Program for Participants in Foster Care

*Status: Passed to be enacted, May 30, 2019*

**S.B. 1734**

**AN ACT TO CREATE A POSTSECONDARY EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION SAMPLING LICENSE**

Sponsors: Rep. Genevieve McDonald (D)

An Act To Create a Postsecondary Educational Institution Sampling License

*Status: Passed to be enacted, May 30, 2019*

## **Massachusetts General Court**

**Budget:** Seven months into the 2019 session and three weeks into the new fiscal year, Massachusetts lawmakers completed work on the FY20 budget. The spending package of \$43.1 billion represents a 3.3% increase over the prior year's budget and contains no new taxes. Revenue collections at the end of FY19, totaled more than \$29.6 billion, exceeding projections by \$1.9 billion, which translated into more state money for local projects in FY20.

Gov. Charlie Baker signed the budget without any line item vetoes, noting the spending plan was balanced. The unexpected boost in revenue collections allowed lawmakers and the governor to put \$476 million in the state's stabilization fund, which now stands at \$3.3 billion, providing a substantial cushion for any emergencies that may arise.

**K-12:** The FY20 budget includes \$5.2 billion to fund public K-12 education including \$270 million in Chapter 70 aid. Also included are resources for a multiyear overhaul of the school finance formula and enabling full implementation of the Foundation Budget Review Commission's recommendations. The caveat is this is good for only one year. Advocates advise that lawmakers must make a commitment to fill the \$1 billion hole in state funding for education in future years.

**College-Readiness:** The budget includes \$20.3 million to develop and expand college and career pathways for high school students through the STEM Pipeline and Early College programs as well as the expansion of targeted workforce development programs for black and Latino youth.

### **Other budget highlights:**

- \$11 billion for the University of Massachusetts, state universities, and community colleges
- \$106 million for scholarship assistance
- \$11 billion for Department of Children and Families
- \$902 million for Department of Mental Health
- \$345 million for special education circuit breaker funding for cities and towns
- \$1.1 billion in direct local aid, an increase of approximately \$30 million over the prior year
- \$115 million to reimburse local school districts for charter schools
- \$698 million in total transportation including Mass DOT operations, MBTA, and regional transit authorities
- \$246 million for the opioid crisis
- \$50 million for struggling nursing homes
- \$179 million for emergency assistance for shelters for homeless families
- \$2.2 million for climate adaptation and preparedness
- \$7 million for Workforce Competitiveness Trust Fund

**Still to be considered:** Bills to improve funding of public education and higher ed

Two bills have been filed to address the underfunding of public education. The Promise Act (S.238), legislation filed by Sen. Sonja Chang-Diaz, would address the \$1 billion underfunding of PreK-12. Most of the \$1 billion is targeted for districts with the greatest need and the least amount of resources. The legislation provides for the following changes in the formula:

- Use of actual data to set health insurance costs and inflation rates in the foundation budget
- Update the formula to include adequate support for English learners and low-income students

- Provide accurate account for special education costs to better reflect actual SPED enrollment and total costs to districts for out-of-district students
- Increase state aid to certain districts to mitigate losses to charter schools.
- Provide a guaranteed minimum annual state aid increase to all districts of \$50 per pupil

A similar measure for higher education, the Cherish Act (S.741) filed by Sen. Jo Comerford and H.1214 (filed by Rep. Sean Garballey) would require:

- State funding of public higher education at no less than its fiscal 2001 per-student funding level (adjusted for inflation)
- Tuition to be frozen for five years providing the legislature appropriates the funds required to reach the FY01 per-student funding level.

**Updated Status on Education and Workforce Bills (\* indicates NEBHE LAC and/or Board Member):**

**Proposed Bill HD.43**

**AN ACT RELATIVE TO STUDENT DEBT**

Sponsors: Office of the State Treasurer

Notwithstanding any general or special law to the contrary, the University of Massachusetts, in consultation with the office of the state treasurer and the department of higher education, shall develop a pilot program on a single campus that provides enrolled students with an estimate of their total outstanding or pending student loan obligations.

*Status: Hearing scheduled for June 11, 2019 from 10:30 AM-01:30 PM*

**Proposed Bill HD.384**

**AN ACT RELATIVE TO A LOAN FORGIVENESS TASK FORCE**

Sponsor: Rep. Bradley Jones, Jr.

There shall be a special task force to review and report on the economic impact of loan forgiveness programs to ensure that college graduates stay, work, and build businesses in Massachusetts.

*Status: Referred to the Joint Committee on Economic Development and Emerging Technologies on January 22, 2019; Senate concurred.*

**Proposed Bill HD.438**

**AN ACT PROMOTING STUDENT LOAN REPAYMENT**

Sponsor: Rep. Peter Durant

The department shall establish an advisory committee to consist of 11 members, including 2 Massachusetts community college or state university professors who teach financial literacy or personal finance, to be appointed by the commissioner of higher education. To equip students with the knowledge and skills they need to become self-supporting and to enable students to make critical

decisions regarding personal finances, the department of elementary and secondary education shall authorize and assist in the implementation of curriculum on personal financial literacy. The components of personal financial literacy covered in the curriculum include the following: understanding loans, borrowing money, interest, credit card debt, and online commerce, etc.

*Status: Hearing scheduled for July 9, 2019 from 10:00 AM-05:00 PM*

**Proposed Bill H.481**

**AN ACT TO FUND A MORE AFFORDABLE PUBLIC HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM IN MASSACHUSETTS**

Sponsor: Rep. Natalie Higgins

There shall be established and set up on the books of the commonwealth a fund to be known as the Education Fund.

*Status: Discharged to the committee on Higher Education on April 16, 2019*

**Proposed Bill H.1210**

**AN ACT RELATIVE TO STUDENT DEBT**

Sponsor: Rep. Ann-Margaret Ferrante

The University of Massachusetts, in consultation with the office of the state treasurer and the department of higher education, shall develop a pilot program on a single campus that provides enrolled students with an estimate of their total outstanding or pending student loan obligations.

*Status: Hearing scheduled for June 11, 2019 from 10:30 AM-01:30*

**Proposed Bill H.1212**

**AN ACT IMPROVING GRADUATION RATES AT PUBLIC COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES**

Sponsor: Rep. Sean Garballey\*

Section 9 of Chapter 15A of the General Laws, as appearing in the 2016 Official Edition, is hereby amended by inserting, after subsection (gg), the following subsection: (hh) develop and administer a policy requiring all public institutions of higher education to provide flexibility in graduation requirements for students who have one or more diagnosed and documented intellectual or developmental disabilities, including autism spectrum disorders, and are enrolled in credit-bearing classes with the intent of earning a degree.

*Status: Hearing scheduled for June 11, 2019 from 10:30 AM-01:30*

**Proposed Bill H.1213**  
**AN ACT CREATING A CHILD SAVINGS PROGRAM**

Sponsor: Rep. Sean Garballey\*

The Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority shall establish a college savings program known as the Massachusetts Child Savings Account Program. (1) The Massachusetts Education Financing Authority shall create a college savings account for each eligible child born and issued a birth certificate in the commonwealth. (2) Upon establishment of a college savings account, the commonwealth shall deposit \$250 into the account.

*Status: Hearing scheduled for July 23, 2019 from 10:30 AM-01:30*

**Proposed Bill H.1216**  
**AN ACT MAKING PUBLIC HIGHER EDUCATION IN MASSACHUSETTS FREE FOR RESIDENTS OF THE STATE**

Sponsor: Rep. Carmen Gentile

Notwithstanding the provisions of any general or special law to the contrary, no tuition or mandatory curriculum fees shall be charged to any resident of the state at any community college listed in section 5. The commonwealth, not the community colleges, shall bear the cost of providing free community colleges for residents of the state.

*Status: Hearing scheduled for April 30, 2019 from 10:00 AM-01:00*

**Proposed Bill H.1227**  
**AN ACT RELATIVE TO IN-STATE TUITION**

Sponsor: Rep. Marc Lombardo

Section 9 of chapter 15A of the General Laws is amended by adding: Notwithstanding any general or special law to the contrary, for the purpose of determining eligibility for in-state tuition rates and fees at public institutions of higher education, for an individual who is not a citizen or permanent resident of the U.S. as defined under federal immigration law, the individual shall not be eligible for in-state tuition.

*Status: Hearing scheduled for July 23, 2019 from 10:30 AM-01:30*

**Proposed Bill H.1230**  
**RESOLUTIONS SUPPORTING EFFORTS TO ENSURE THAT STUDENTS FROM MASSACHUSETTS HAVE ACCESS TO DEBT-FREE HIGHER EDUCATION AT PUBLIC COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES**

Sponsor: Rep. Paul Mark

Proposed bill: 1. Ensures all students have access to debt-free higher education, defined to mean having no debt upon graduation from any public institutions of higher education; 2. Supports efforts that increase support to States so States can increase investments in higher education and bring down costs for students; 3. Increases aid to students to help them cover the total cost of college attendance without taking on debt; 4. Encourages innovation by States and institutions of higher education to increase

efficiency, lower costs, and enable speedy and less-costly degree completion; and 5. Reduces the burden of existing student loan debt.

*Status: Hearing scheduled for July 23, 2019 from 10:30 AM-01:30*

**Proposed Bill H.1242**

**AN ACT RELATIVE TO COLLEGE TUITION AND ADMISSIONS**

Sponsor: Rep. Alan Silvia

Chapter 69 of the General Laws is amended by adding: In making decisions relating to admissions, scholarships and grants, any college, university, community college or junior college within the system of public institutions of higher education as set forth in section 5 of chapter 15A, shall identify and give priority to students or prospective students residing in the commonwealth: (1) whose biological parents are deceased or had their parental rights terminated due to abuse or neglect; and (2) who have been legally adopted by a blood relative within the third level of consanguinity or were assigned a permanent legal guardian by a court.

*Status: Hearing scheduled for July 23, 2019 from 10:30 AM-01:30*

**Proposed Bill H.1247**

**AN ACT REQUIRING INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION TO PROVIDE UNIFORM FINANCIAL AID INFORMATION TO ACCEPTED APPLICANTS**

Sponsor: (Rep. Andres Vargas, Rep. Dylan Fernandes)

An institution of higher education shall provide each accepted applicant with a uniform financial aid information shopping sheet to assist the accepted applicant with the applicant's decision to enroll in the institution of higher education.

*Status: Hearing scheduled for July 23, 2019 from 10:30 AM-01:30*

**Proposed Bill H.1248**

**AN ACT ESTABLISHING A COMMISSION TO STUDY STUDENT LOAN DEBT RELIEF PROGRAMS**

Sponsor: Rep. John Velis

The Massachusetts General Court shall initiate a commission to study and draft policies to ease the burden of student loan debt on citizens on the Commonwealth.

*Status: Hearing scheduled for July 23, 2019 from 10:30 AM-01:30*

**Proposed Bill H.1249**

**AN ACT ESTABLISHING A SPECIAL COMMISSION TO REVIEW OPPORTUNITIES TO REDUCE THE COSTS OF HIGHER EDUCATION BY IMPROVING THE UTILIZATION OF DIGITAL LEARNING TECHNOLOGY**

Sponsor: Rep. Thomas Walsh

Resolved, that a special commission is hereby established to review and study the feasibility of improving the utilization of digital learning technology in institutions of higher education in order to reduce the cost of course materials , textbooks and other costs of higher education.

*Status: Hearing scheduled for June 11, 2019 from 10:30 AM-01:30*

**Proposed Bill H.2450  
AN ACT PROMOTING STUDENT LOAN REPAYMENT**

Sponsor: Rep. Peter Durant

Any business that provides student loan payment assistance to a qualified employee or directly to the holder of the employee's qualified education loan shall be allowed a credit against the tax liability imposed by this chapter in an amount equal to 100 per cent of the student loan assistance paid; provided however, that a credit under this section shall not exceed \$4,500 dollars per qualified employee in any tax year.

*Status: Referred to the Committee on Revenue on January 22, 2019*

**Proposed Bill H.3383  
AN ACT RELATIVE TO NEUTRAL INVESTIGATIONS AT PUBLIC HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS**

Sponsor: Rep. Paul Mark

All institutions of higher education shall promote an environment free of sexual harassment for their students.

*Status: Hearing scheduled for June 17, 2019 from 1:00-5:00 PM*

**Proposed Bill H.3977 (formerly H.1069)  
AN ACT ESTABLISHING A STUDENT LOAN BILL OF RIGHTS**

Sponsor: Rep. David Muradian

Proposes establishing the position of Student Loan Ombudsman within the Office of the Attorney General. The student loan ombudsman shall receive, review and assist in resolving 5 complaints from student loan borrowers including, but not limited to, those concerning attempts 6 to resolve complaints in collaboration with institutions of higher education, student loan 7 servicers, and any other participants in student loan lending.

*Status: Bill reported favorably by committee and referred to the committee on House Ways and Means on July 18, 2019; see H3977*

**Proposed Senate Bill S.210**

**AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE MASSACHUSETTS FUTURE OF WORK COMMISSION**

Sponsor: Sen. Eric Lesser

There shall be a special commission called the Massachusetts Future of Work Commission established to conduct a comprehensive study relative to the impact automation, artificial intelligence, global trade, access to new forms of data, and the internet of things are having on the commonwealth's workforce, businesses, and economy, with the main objective of said commission being to ensure sustainable jobs, fair benefits and workplace safety standards for all workers in all industries, including, but not limited to, access to adequate and affordable health insurance, financial security in retirement, unemployment insurance, and disability insurance.

*Status: Referred to the Committee on Economic Development and Emerging Technologies on January 22, 2019*

**Proposed Bill S.740**

**AN ACT PROVIDING ACCESS TO HIGHER EDUCATION FOR HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES IN THE COMMONWEALTH**

Sponsor: Rep. Sonia Chang-Diaz

Any person admitted to such public institutions of higher education, other than a nonimmigrant alien within the meaning of paragraph 15 of subsection (a)(A) through (S) of 8 U.S.C., section 1101 of the federal act, who has attended high school in the commonwealth for 3 or more years and has graduated from a high school in the commonwealth or attained the equivalent thereof in the commonwealth, shall be eligible to pay in-state tuition rates and fees, and shall be eligible on the same terms as other persons for state-funded financial assistance, at the University of Massachusetts, or any other state university or state college or community college in the commonwealth.

*Status: Hearing scheduled for July 23, 2019 from 10:30 AM-01:30*

**Proposed Senate Bill S.741**

**AN ACT COMMITTING TO HIGHER EDUCATION THE RESOURCES TO INSURE A STRONG AND HEALTHY PUBLIC HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM (C.H.E.R.I.S.H. ACT)**

Sponsor: Sen. Joanne Comerford

To assure fair and adequate funding for the commonwealth's public institutions of higher education (HEIs) by assuring that the appropriation to fund such institutions equals the level of funding in effect in fiscal year 2001, adjusted for inflation, and maintained, at a minimum, at that level thereafter. Beginning in fiscal year 2020, the council would restore the level of funding of public HEIs and needs based financial assistance to no less than the total per student appropriation for fiscal year 2001, adjusted for inflation to the current fiscal year.

*Status: Hearing scheduled for April 30, 2019 from 10:00 AM-01:00 PM*

**Proposed Bill S.744**  
**AN ACT TO GUARANTEE DEBT-FREE PUBLIC HIGHER EDUCATION**

Sponsor: Rep. James Eldridge

To create a grant program to pay the equivalent of tuition and mandatory fees to an eligible student at any Massachusetts public college or university, or certificate, vocational, or training program at a public institution, up to the equivalent of four years of public college or university.

*Status: Hearing scheduled for April 30, 2019 from 10:00 AM-01:00*

**Proposed Senate Bill S.747**  
**AN ACT RELATIVE TO DISCIPLINARY NOTATIONS ON COLLEGE TRANSCRIPTS**

Sponsor: Sen. Adam Hinds

Each institution of higher education shall adopt policies on academic transcript notations and appeals relating to crimes of violence, including, but not limited to, sexual violence, that shall be made publicly available by publishing the policy on an institution's website and by annually providing a copy of said policies to students, faculty and staff.

*Status: Hearing scheduled for April 9, 2019 from 10:30 AM-01:00*

**Proposed Senate Bill S.750**  
**AN ACT PROTECTING STUDENTS AND INCREASING ACCOUNTABILITY AT MASSACHUSETTS COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES**

Sponsor: Sen. Edward Kennedy

Each institution of higher education shall adopt policies on academic transcript notations and appeals relating to crimes of violence, including, but not limited to, sexual violence, that shall be made publicly available by publishing the policy on an institution's website and by annually providing a copy of said policies to students, faculty and staff.

*Status: Hearing scheduled for July 23, 2019 from 10:30 AM-01:30 PM*

**Proposed Senate Bill S.751**  
**AN ACT INVESTING IN PUBLIC HIGHER EDUCATION**

Sponsor: Sen. Edward Kennedy

Section 2 (e) of Chapter 32A of the General Laws, as appearing in the 2016 Official Edition, is hereby amended in line 117 by inserting after the word "hours" the following: - "; or a faculty member who teaches the equivalent of at least two three or more- credit courses per semester, or four three or more- credit courses per calendar year at one or more of the public institutions of higher education in the state, as set forth in Section 5 of Chapter 15A, including a division of continuing education, regardless of funding source, including but not limited to subsidiary account CC, and regardless of the

term of employment or participation or membership in a retirement system or plan; provided, that the commonwealth, not the public higher education institutions, shall bear the cost.”

*Status: Hearing scheduled for June 11, 2019 from 10:30 AM-01:30 PM*

**Proposed Senate Bill S.756**

**AN ACT CREATING HIGHER EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES FOR STUDENTS WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES, AUTISM, AND OTHER DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES**

Sponsor: Sen. Joan Lovely

To provide inclusive educational opportunities for individuals with severe intellectual disabilities or autism spectrum disorders and other severe developmental disabilities to improve academic achievement, develop employment and independent living skills.

*Status: Hearing scheduled for June 11, 2019 from 10:30 AM-01:30 PM*

**Proposed Senate Bill S.757**

**AN ACT ESTABLISHING A COMMUNITY COLLEGE CAMPUS HUNGER PILOT PROGRAM**

Sponsor: Sen. Joan Lovely

To establish a fund to address food insecurity on community college campuses that shall be known as the Massachusetts Community College Campus Hunger Program.

*Status: Hearing scheduled for July 23, 2019 from 10:30 AM-01:30 PM*

**Proposed Senate Bill S.759**

**AN ACT PROTECTING PUBLIC HIGHER EDUCATION STUDENT INFORMATION**

Sponsor: Sen. Michael O. Moore\*

No state scholarship funds under this section, any other section of this chapter, or other state student financial aid, shall be made available to, or on behalf, of any student enrolled in any postsecondary educational institution which the board of Higher Education determines does not meet the requirements of this paragraph. To meet the requirements of this paragraph, a postsecondary educational institution shall demonstrate to the board that it has: (i) graduation rates of not less than 30% for undergraduate students taking 150% or less of the expected time to complete degree requirements, as most recently reported by the U.S. Dept. of Higher Education, provided, that graduation rates shall include students who transfer; or (ii) an average 3 year cohort default rate that is not more than 20%, as most recently reported by the U.S. Dept. of Education.

*Status: Hearing scheduled for June 11, 2019 from 10:30 AM-01:30 PM*

**Proposed Senate Bill S.760**  
**AN ACT RELATIVE TO EARLY COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOLS**

Sponsor: Sen. Michael O. Moore\*

There shall be a Massachusetts Early College Education Program, administered jointly by the commissioner of the department of higher education and the commissioner of the department of elementary and secondary education, to help increase postsecondary education participation and completion. The program shall consist of partnerships among public secondary institutions and institutions of higher education in the commonwealth designated as Massachusetts Early College Schools by the commissioners.

*Status: Hearing scheduled for May 13, 2019 from 10:30 AM-01:30 PM*

**Proposed Senate Bill S.761**  
**AN ACT RELATIVE TO TRANSPARENCY IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

Sponsor: Sen. Michael O. Moore\*

Any institution of higher education with power to grant degrees and located in the commonwealth which enters into discussions or written agreements to: (i) close; (ii) merge with another institution of higher education; (iii) acquire the facilities, resources or land of another institution of higher education; or (iv) to open a branch campus or additional instructional location on purchased or leased property shall provide the board of higher education with reasonable notice no less than 120 days in advance of the intended closure, merger, acquisition or opening. Notice shall not be a public record and shall be exempt from disclosure under clause Twenty sixth of section 7 of chapter 4 or section 10 of chapter 66.

*Status: Hearing scheduled for May 13, 2019 from 10:30 AM-01:30 PM*

**Proposed Senate Bill S.767**  
**AN ACT RELATIVE TO UMASS TAX CREDIT**

Sponsor: Sen. Marc Pacheco\*

SECTION 1. Section 1B of Chapter 75 of the General Laws, as so appearing, is hereby amended by adding at the end of subsection (f) the following words:- "The value of the tuition credit shall be adjusted annually to ensure the value of said credit is worth no less than 12.5 % of the total student charges for the academic year."

*Status: Hearing scheduled for July 23, 2019 from 10:30 AM-01:30 PM*

**Proposed Senate Bill S.770**  
**AN ACT ESTABLISHING A SPECIAL COMMISSION TO REVIEW OPPORTUNITIES TO REDUCE THE COSTS OF HIGHER EDUCATION BY IMPROVING THE UTILIZATION OF DIGITAL LEARNING TECHNOLOGY**

Sponsor: Sen. Walter Timilty

Resolved, that a special commission is hereby established to review and study the feasibility of improving the utilization of digital learning technology in institutions of higher education in order to reduce the cost of course materials, textbooks and other costs of higher education.

*Status: Hearing scheduled for June 11, 2019 from 10:30 AM-01:30 PM*

**Proposed Senate Bill S.772**

**AN ACT RELATIVE TO ACCESS TO HIGHER EDUCATION FOR VETERANS**

Sponsor: Sen. Dean Tran

Any individual admitted to such public institutions of higher education who qualifies as a veteran, as defined in clause forty-third of section 7 of chapter 4, shall be eligible to pay in-state tuition rates and fees at the University of Massachusetts or any state or community college or university, immediately upon establishing residency in the Commonwealth.

*Status: Hearing scheduled for July 23, 2019 from 10:30 AM-01:30 PM*

**Proposed Senate Bill S.1471**

**AN ACT RELATIVE TO PART-TIME HIGHER EDUCATION FACULTY ELIGIBILITY IN THE STATE RETIREMENT SYSTEM**

Sponsor: Sen. Michael Brady

For faculty employed at one or more state higher education institution, the Board, in accordance with the provisions of this section, shall allow credit for any previous period of service equivalent to teaching at least four three- credit courses per calendar year at one or more state higher education institution, including a division of continuing education, regardless of funding source, including but not limited to subsidiary account CC.

*Status: Hearing scheduled for May 29, 2019 from 11:00 AM-01:00*

**Proposed Senate Bill S.1547**

**AN ACT TO ENSURE FAIR PUBLIC HIGHER EDUCATION WORKPLACES**

Sponsor: Sen. Patricia Jehlen

Any faculty who teach the equivalent of at least two three credit courses per semester or four three or more- credit courses per calendar year at one or more of the public institutions of higher education, including a division of continuing education, regardless of funding source, including but not limited to subsidiary account CC, shall be considered an employee eligible for membership in the state employees retirement system and shall earn creditable service for such time.

*Status: Hearing scheduled for July 23, 2019 from 01:00 PM-05:00 PM*

**Proposed Senate Bill S.1689**  
**AN ACT ENCOURAGING EMPLOYER STUDENT LOAN REPAYMENT**

Sponsor: Sen. Edward Kennedy

In determining the net income subject to tax under this chapter, a business corporation shall be allowed a deduction of an amount equal to the principal payments on education debts paid by the business corporation on behalf of an employee who is a resident of the commonwealth; provided however, that the deduction taken for payments on education debts paid on behalf of any individual employee shall not exceed \$2,000.

*Status: Hearing scheduled for July 23, 2019 from 01:00 PM-05:00 PM*

**Proposed Senate Bill S.1699**  
**AN ACT PROMOTING ACCESS TO HIGHER EDUCATION BEGINNING AT BIRTH**

Sponsor: Sen. Eric Lesser

In order to encourage every child in Massachusetts to seek higher education and to encourage residents of Massachusetts to stay in the commonwealth, there shall be established and set on the books of the commonwealth a program for investment by the commonwealth in the future college education of all newly born residents.

*Status: Hearing scheduled for July 23, 2019 from 01:00 PM-05:00 PM*

**Proposed Senate Bill S.1724**  
**AN ACT ESTABLISHING A COLLEGE TUITION TAX DEDUCTION**

Sponsor: Sen. Michael O. Moore\*

An amount equal to 50 per cent of the cost of tuition payments made by the taxpayer to a public institution of higher education, as defined by section 5 of chapter 15A, in which the taxpayer or a dependent of said taxpayer is enrolled, less any scholarships, grants or financial aid received. No deduction shall be allowed under this subparagraph if a deduction is claimed under subparagraph (11).

*Status: Hearing scheduled for July 23, 2019 from 01:00 PM-05:00 PM*

**Proposed Senate Bill S.2183**  
**AN ACT TO SUPPORT IMPROVED FINANCIAL STABILITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

Sponsor: Governor Charles D. Baker

*Emergency Preamble:*

*Whereas, the deferred operation of this act would tend to defeat its purpose, which is to address the financial stability of institutions of higher education in the Commonwealth, therefore it is hereby declared to be an emergency law, necessary for the immediate preservation of the public convenience.*

Any institution of higher education with the power to grant degrees in the commonwealth that has any known liabilities or risks which may result in the imminent closure of the institution or jeopardize the

institution's ability to fulfill its obligations to current and admitted students shall (a) notify the board of higher education of such known liabilities or risks; and (b) prepare and submit to said board, for its approval, a contingency closure plan which shall include a process for providing enrolled and admitted students and staff with timely notification of the institution's financial condition, accreditation status, and any outstanding compliance issues regarding federal student aid programs; arrangements for enabling students to complete their programs of study; and a plan for the transfer and long-term maintenance of student records in the event that the institution ceases to exist.

*Status: Hearing scheduled for May 13, 2019 from 10:30 AM-01:30 PM*

## **New Hampshire General Court**

*Still in session. Summary forthcoming.*

### **Education and Workforce Bills Passed (\* indicates NEBHE LAC and/or Board Member):**

#### **H.B.123**

#### **AN ACT RELATIVE TO EMERGENCY RESPONSE PLANS IN SCHOOLS**

Sponsors: Rep. Ladd, Rep. Cordelli, Rep. Shaw

This bill requires each school's emergency response plan to include at least one drill to test emergency response to an armed assailant.

*Status: Signed by Governor Sununu May 15, 2019*

#### **H.B.181**

#### **AN ACT RELATIVE TO THE HOUSE AND SENATE MEMBERS OF THE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

Sponsors: Rep. Ladd, Rep. Hinch, Rep. Hennessey, Rep. Shaw, Sen. Gray

This bill repeals the effective date of the removal of the members of the house of representatives and the senate from the university system of New Hampshire board of trustees resulting in the house and senate members remaining on the board as voting members.

*Status: Signed by Governor Sununu May 10, 2019*

#### **H.B. 258**

#### **AN ACT ESTABLISHING A COMMISSION TO STUDY TEACHER PREPARATION AND EDUCATION PROGRAMS**

Sponsors: Rep. Mary Heath (D), Rep. Connie Van Houten (D), Rep. Patricia Cornell (D)

There is established a commission to study New Hampshire teacher preparation and education programs. The commission shall:

- (a) Study New Hampshire teacher preparation and education programs that prepare teachers for careers in education in New Hampshire.
- (b) Specifically study the features of teacher preparation and education programs, including but not limited to recruitment and admission standards; teacher preparation and education courses; requirements for student teaching including internships, externships, and residencies; professional standards; salaries; certification and continuing education requirements; teacher absenteeism; and retention.
- (c) Review research based practices and the status of their implementation within programs such as competency based learning, project based learning, and assessment measures such as performance assessment of competency education (PACE).

- (d) Review the status of current laws and rules that govern such programs at the state and federal level.
- (e) Review the areas of critical need for teachers and make recommendations.
- (f) Review challenges and impediments to attracting teachers to New Hampshire schools, such as the cost of higher education and the extensive debt accrued for those seeking to be teachers.
- (g) Consider and investigate international and national programs that have shown extraordinary results and identify the factors that contribute to such results.
- (h) Recommend changes to current legislation and rules.

*Status: Signed by Governor Sununu July 19, 2019*

**H.B. 356**

**RELATIVE TO THE RETENTION OF CERTAIN REPORTS BY INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER LEARNING**

Sponsors: Rep. Roderick Ladd (R)

This bill changes the amount of time an institution of higher learning which has ceased instruction is required to retain certain records. When any institution of higher learning ceases regular conduct of instruction, certified transcripts and an electronic copy of the same shall be forwarded to the commission together with a course catalog for each year in which the institution operated, as well as an explanation of the institution's credit and grading system. The commission shall preserve these records for 50 years.

*Status: Signed by Governor Sununu June 5, 2019*

**H.B. 435**

**AN ACT RELATIVE TO CERTAIN TERMINOLOGY IN THE RULEMAKING AUTHORITY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

Sponsors: Rep. Mel Myler (D)

This bill corrects certain terminology in the rulemaking authority of the department of education.

*Status: Signed by Governor Sununu July 19, 2019*

**H.B. 448**

**AN ACT MAKING TECHNICAL CORRECTIONS IN THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

Sponsors: Rep. Roderick Ladd (R)

This bill makes technical corrections within the department of education.

*Status: Signed by Governor Sununu June 25, 2019*

**H.B. 570**

**AN ACT ESTABLISHING A COMMISSION TO STUDY CAREER PATHWAYS FROM FULL-TIME SERVICE YEAR PROGRAMS TO POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES IN SUPPORT OF NEW HAMPSHIRE'S FUTURE WORKFORCE NEEDS**

Sponsors: Rep. Matt Wilhelm (D), Rep. Mary Heath (D), Sen. Dan Feltes (D), Sen. Jeb Bradley (R)

This bill establishes a commission to study career pathways from full-time service year programs to postsecondary education and employment opportunities in support of New Hampshire's future workforce needs.

*Status: Signed by Governor Sununu June 25, 2019*

**S.B. 12**

**AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE NEW HAMPSHIRE COLLEGE GRADUATE RETENTION INCENTIVE PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM AND MAKING AN APPROPRIATION THEREFOR**

Sponsors: Sen. Jay Kahn (D)\*, Sen. Martha Fuller Clark (D), Sen. Dan Feltes (D), Sen. Martha Hennessey (D), Rep. Jon Morgan (D), Sen. Donna Soucy (D), Sen. David Watters (D)\*, Sen. Jeanne Dietsch (D), Sen. Shannon Chandley (D), Sen. Cindy Rosenwald (D), Sen. Melanie Levesque (D)\*, Sen. Thomas Sherman (D), Sen. Kevin Cavanaugh (D), Rep. David Luneau (I)

This bill establishes the New Hampshire college graduate retention incentive partnership (NH GRIP) which provides financial incentives to college graduates who are hired by participating employers and makes an appropriation to the department of business and economic affairs for that purpose.

*Status: Became law without signature on August 3, 2019*

**S.B. 136**

**AN ACT RELATIVE TO CLASSIFICATION OF STUDENTS FOR TUITION PURPOSES IN THE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM**

Sponsors: Sen. Jay Kahn (D)\*, Sen. Martha Fuller Clark (D), Rep. William Hatch (D), Rep. Carol McGuire (R)

This bill removes the rulemaking requirement for the adoption of criteria by the university system board of trustees governing the classification of students for tuition purposes.

*Status: Signed by Governor Sununu June 5, 2019*

**S.B. 139**

**AN ACT ESTABLISHING A COMMITTEE TO STUDY OPTIONS FOR LOWERING STUDENT DEBT**

Sponsors: Sen. Shannon Chandley (D), Sen. Martha Hennessey (D), Sen. Melanie Levesque (D)\*, Rep. Megan Murray (D), Rep. David Luneau (I)

This bill establishes a committee to study options for lowering student loan debt.

*Status: Signed by Governor Sununu June 8, 2019*

**S.B. 270**

**AN ACT ESTABLISHING A TAX CREDIT AGAINST THE BUSINESS PROFITS TAX FOR DONATIONS TO CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION CENTERS**

Sponsors: Sen. David Watters (D)\*, Sen. Jeb. Bradley (R), Sen. Lou D'Allesandro (D)\*, Sen. Martha Fuller Clark (D), Sen. Bob Guida (R), Sen. James Gray (R), Sen. Melanie Levesque (D)\*, Rep. Jon Morgan (D), Sen. Thomas Sherman (D), Rep. Barbara Shaw (D)

This bill establishes a tax credit against business profits taxes for donations to career and technical education centers. The donation program is repealed June 30, 2022.

*Status: Signed by Governor Sununu July 12, 2019*

**S.B. 276**

**AN ACT RELATIVE TO CAREER READINESS CREDENTIALS FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS**

Sponsors: Sen. Jay Kahn (D)\*, Sen. Cindy Rosenwald (D), Sen. Shannon Chandley (D), Sen. Thomas Sherman (D), Sen. Martha Hennessey (D), Sen. Melanie Levesque (D)\*, Sen. Kevin Cavanaugh (D), Sen. Dan Feltes (D), Rep. Roderick Ladd (R), Rep. David Luneau (I), Rep. Tamara Le (D)

This bill defines certain terms related to career and technical education programs, creates ways for New Hampshire high school students to earn career ready credentials, adds to the reporting requirement of the advisory council on career and technical education, and permits students in grade 10 to enroll in career and technical education courses.

*Status: Signed by Governor Sununu August 12, 2019*

## **Rhode Island General Assembly**

Rhode Island lawmakers tackled education reform and approved a separate board of trustees for URI, even as they erased a \$200 million budget gap.

**Budget:** Gov. Gina Raimondo signed a \$9.9 billion budget for FY20, which avoids new taxes, strengthens PreK-12, continues the phase-out of the car tax (auto excise tax), and closes a \$200 million budget gap. Cuts were made to the Real Jobs Rhode Island job-training program and the Qualified Jobs program.

Legislators fully funded the Rhode Island Promise program at the two-year Community College of Rhode Island, but rejected Gov. Raimondo's plan to expand the program to cover four-year programs at Rhode Island College. They also rejected most of Raimondo's requested funding to introduce universal PreK, as well as her proposals to expand the sales tax, increase the hotel tax and impose a new tax on firearms and ammunition. They accepted her proposals to include digital downloads and streaming services such as Netflix under the sales tax.

In education, the 2019 budget also:

- Adds \$2.9 million for PreK classrooms for 300 new seats with expansion targeted toward the neediest families
- Increases direct aid to schools by \$33 million over the current year.
- Increases funding for English language learners to \$5 million.
- Adds \$640,000 for the Rhode Island Department of Education to be used for education reform
- Creates 17-member Board of Trustees for the University of Rhode Island, which will no longer come under the aegis of the Office of Postsecondary Education (URI President David Dooley requested the separate board to increase URI's national and international profile as well as boosting fundraising, scholarships endowments, research and capital investment.)
- Authorizes revenue bonds for construction at the University of Rhode Island, with \$51.5 million for expansion and renovation of Memorial Union and \$26.9 million for a new health and counseling center.

**Budget casualties:** Lawmakers rejected Gov. Raimondo's proposal to legalize recreational marijuana, increase the tax on cigarettes by 25 cent per pack and 30 cents on cigars, and increase the minimum wage from \$10.50 to \$11.10 next year.

**Opioid Epidemic:** The budget establishes a restricted receipt account for opioid treatment, recovery, prevention, and education services funded by an assessment to manufacturers and distributors on opioid products sold or distributed in Rhode Island (with exemptions for those used in hospice care, addiction treatment and epidurals).

**Roadway Renovations:** The budget authorizes the Rhode Island Turnpike and Bridge Authority to issue up to \$50 million in revenue bonds to finance renovations and repairs to bridges under its purview, and approves up to \$200 million in Grant Anticipation Revenue Vehicle bonds to fund the reconstruction of the viaduct that carries Route 95 North through the City of Providence.

**Economic Development:** Lawmakers provided additional funds to Rebuild Rhode Island for future tax credits and created the Rhode Island Small Business Development Fund to encourage investment of private capital by federally licensed investment companies

They established a process for creating Special Economic Development Districts on tracts of state-owned land not under the control of the Department of Environmental Management. Lawmakers also increased tax credits from \$15 million to \$25 million for the Hope Point Tower project. The controversial project has met with opposition from the Providence Downtown Design Review Committee, which unanimously opposed the developer's most recent application for a waiver on the 100-foot height restriction to 500 feet. The building would be 46 floors high.

**Education:** Education reform was also a key issue in the Ocean State, after a scathing report about the quality of schools in Providence and elsewhere. Rhode Island legislators looked to neighboring Massachusetts in addressing ways to improve the situation. Lawmakers approved two bills to reform PreK-12 education in Rhode Island. The first bill cosponsored by Rep. Joseph McNamara (H 5008B) and Sen. Hanna Gallo (S 08638) would require the commissioner of education to align statewide standards with curriculum and the Rhode Island Comprehensive Assessment System. According to Gallo, this legislation would provide academic standards that target the skills, competencies and knowledge necessary for student success.

The second bill, sponsored by Sen. Harold Metts (S-0869A) and Rep. Jean Philippe Barros (H 6085Aaa), makes it easier for school principals to be certified by creating a fast-track mandatory program in the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. Applicants would have to meet experience, academic and leadership requirements.

Lawmakers also approved legislation to prevent violence at schools. Gallo and House Speaker Nicholas Mattiello cosponsored legislation to create threat assessment teams in schools to identify potentially threatening behavior.

**Healthcare, Alzheimer's care:** Several bills were passed that provide support for Rhode Islanders affected by Alzheimer's disease including a bill to allow the spouses or partners of patients residing in Alzheimer's or dementia care units or programs to live with them.

Also approved was legislation that would establish a formal process to provide a structure for support of disabled or aging individuals, which is not as restrictive as guardianship, to allow individuals to maintain some measure of independence.

#### **Bills that Failed to Pass:**

- Marijuana legalization
- Compensation for wrongfully convicted
- Plastic bag/plastic straw restrictions
- Uniform Parentage Act
- Early voting
- Pay equity
- Pharmacist prescribed birth control
- Renaming the airport
- Legalizing stun guns
- Ban on 3-D printed weapons
- Providence homestead exemption
- Animal abuser registry
- State astronomer

**Education and Workforce Bills Passed (\* indicates NEBHE LAC and/or Board Member):**

**S.B. 737/H.B. 5936**

**CREATES THE "STUDENT LOAN BILL OF RIGHTS ACT" WHICH ESTABLISHES GUIDELINES FOR THE ISSUANCE OF POSTSECONDARY LOANS.**

Sponsors: Senate - Sen. Hanna Gallo (D)\*, Sen. Harold Metts (D)\*, Sen. Louis Dipalma (D)\*, Sen. Dawn Euer (D), Sen. Sandra Cano (D); House – Rep. Joseph McNamara (D)\*, Rep. Gregg Amore (D)\*, Rep. Karen Alzate (D), Rep. Terri-Denise Cortvriend (D), Rep. Brian Newberry (R)

This act would create the "student loan bill of rights act", which would establish guidelines for the attorney general's consumer protection unit, in collaboration with the director of business regulation, the general treasurer, and the commissioner of postsecondary education to receive and review complaints of student loan borrowers. In addition, the duties and responsibilities of student loan servicers are set forth in the act.

*Status: Passed July 15, 2019; Signed by the governor*

**S.B. 755/H.B. 6240**

**EXEMPTS THOSE STUDENTS IN GRADE TWELVE (12) WHO ARE ENROLLED FULL-TIME IN A DUAL ENROLLMENT PROGRAM WHERE THE COURSES ARE TAKEN ON A HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION CAMPUS FROM THE REQUIREMENT THAT THEY COMPLETE HEALTH AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION COURSES.**

Sponsors: Senate - Sen. Harold Metts (D)\*, Sen. Adam Satchell (D), Sen. Roger Picard (D), Sen. Ryan Pearson (D); House – Rep. David Bennett (D), Rep. John Edwards (D)

This act would exempt those students in grade twelve (12) who are enrolled full-time in a dual enrollment program where the courses are taken on a higher education institution campus from the requirement that they complete health and physical education courses.

*Status: Passed July 15, 2019; Signed by the governor*

**S.B. 863**

**SENATE RESOLUTION RESPECTFULLY REQUESTING THE GOVERNOR'S WORKFORCE BOARD TO WORK WITH THE RHODE ISLAND DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND TRAINING TO DEVELOP A REPORT ON THE FEASIBILITY OF EXPANDING NON-TRADE REGISTERED APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAMS IN RHODE ISLAND**

Sponsors: Sen. Hanna Gallo (D)\*, Sen. Dominick Ruggerio (D), Sen. Maryellen Goodwin (D), Sen. Michael McCaffrey (D), Sen. Dennis Algieri (R)

This act would require the commissioner of elementary and secondary education to develop statewide academic standards and curriculum frameworks for the core subjects of mathematics, English language arts, and science and technology. This act would also require the commissioner to identify at least five (5) examples of high-quality curriculum and materials for each of the core subjects, after which local education agencies ("LEAs") would be required to select and implement one for each of the core

subjects. Once LEAs select a high-quality curriculum and materials, the department of elementary and secondary education ("department") would identify an LEA assistance partner from within the department to provide any and all support regarding access to, implementation of, and professional development for the curriculum and materials.

*Status: Passed July 8, 2019; Signed by the governor*

### **Vermont General Assembly**

The Vermont General Assembly adjourned the 2019 session in stages as the House and Senate, both with Democratic majorities, were unable to resolve their differences on two major proposals: raising the minimum wage to \$15 an hour and a plan to provide paid family and medical leave to Vermonters. Despite broad agreement among Democrats to approve both measures, final agreement proved to be elusive. As time ran out, Speaker Mitzi Johnson gaveled the House adjourned on Friday, May 24. Senate President Tim Ashe hoped the House would return to the Capitol to work out the differences, but the House was not persuaded. The Senate finally adjourned on May 29, unable to engage the House. Legislative leaders agreed to bring up both proposals in the next legislative session.

**Budget:** Lawmakers passed a \$6.1 billion budget for FY20. Budget writers focused much of their efforts on social services for low-income Vermonters. Included in the budget was a \$7.4 million increase for childcare. The bulk of the increase will fund childcare subsidies for low-income families and raise reimbursement rates for providers. Funding will be provided for scholarships for childcare workers and childcare degree programs at technical colleges. This is intended to address a shortage of childcare workers in the state.

### **Among other highlights, lawmakers passed:**

- An increase of \$2.5 million to the Vermont State Colleges (VSC) prompted VSC's Board of Trustees to reduce an increase in tuition from 3% to 1%
- An amendment to the state constitution to protect abortion rights as well as a bill to codify abortion rights in state statute. (Statewide voter approval of both measures is required to guarantee a woman's right to an abortion.)
- A 24-hour waiting period for purchasing a handgun
- A lead-testing program for drinking water supplies at schools and childcare facilities
- A ban on single-use plastic grocery bags and Styrofoam carryout containers and a requirement that restaurants and other establishments provide plastic straws only by customer request
- An increase in the minimum age to purchase tobacco products was raised to 21 years, up from the current 18
- An expansion of last year's remote worker incentive program to attract more families to Vermont, providing them with up to \$10,000 for moving expenses, office space rentals and broadband hookups.
- Support for \$4.6 million for electric vehicles
- Support for \$1.5 million in improvements to broadband
- A law taking 6% of the rooms and meals tax revenue from the general fund to a dedicated fund for clean water.

**Education and Workforce Bills Passed (\* indicates NEBHE LAC and/or Board Member):**

**Bill H-427**

**AN ACT RELATING TO A UNIFORM PROCESS FOR FOREIGN CREDENTIAL VERIFICATION IN THE OFFICE OF PROFESSIONAL REGULATION**

Sponsor: Rep. Harold Colston (D), Rep. Kevin Christie (D), Rep. Brian Cina (D), Rep. Mari Cordes (D), Rep. Diana Gonzalez (D), Rep. John Killacky (D), Rep. Marybeth Redmond (D)

The Director of the Office of Professional Regulation shall adopt rules that prescribe a process for the Director to assess the equivalence of an applicant's professional credentials earned outside the United States as compared to State licensing requirements for those professions attached to the Office that do not have laws addressing the verification and recognition of such credentials.

*Status: Passed House on April 30, 2019. Governor approved bill on April 30, 2019.*

**Bill H-533**

**AN ACT RELATING TO WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT**

Sponsor: Committee on Commerce and Economic Development

This bill aims to promote greater access to training opportunities for Vermont small businesses and to increase the resources available for employees to obtain credentials of value or apprenticeships. It also proposes that Vermont take the needed steps to achieve a postsecondary attainment goal of not less than 70% of working-age Vermonters possess a credential of value by the year 2025.

*Status: Passed House on June 20, 2019. Governor approved bill on June 20, 2019.*