



State Senate — District 38 —

June Newsletter: End-of-Session Takeaways



Dear Friends and Neighbors,

We've finished another legislative session! After many nights of long committee hearings, bill sponsors and committee chairs work on their bill edits, and June is when bills can be approved for votes in committee and then gain final passage in the House & Senate.

New Leadership: In the past month the RI House of Representatives also elevated Majority Leader Blazejewski to the position of House Speaker and Majority Whip Katie Kazarian to the position of House Whip. Congratulations to them and the outgoing Speaker Joseph Shekarchi for their years of service.

Bills I Passed

Shoreline Access Disclosure for Oceanfront Property Rentals:

The House & Senate passed my bill S-2734A to help make sure renters and short-term rental guests understand Rhode Island's shoreline access rights.

Part of the motivation for this bill came from seeing some short-term rental listings advertise a "private beach," even though Rhode Island law protects public shoreline access up to 10 feet above the recognizable high tide line. This bill helps make sure visitors and tenants get clear information about those rights before they stay at an oceanfront property.

Food is Medicine: The General Assembly has passed my Food as Medicine bill, which creates a task force to design a Medicaid pilot program that uses medically tailored meals or other nutritional supports to improve the health of patients with chronic, diet-related conditions.

Food insecurity is strongly linked to many of the most costly preventable chronic diseases, including diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and obesity, which drive enormous health care spending.

Medicaid accounts for about one-third of our state budget and is growing at an estimated 6% per year. Our budget will have a growing deficit unless we look at evidence-based programs like food as medicine.

60 Days Advance Notice of Home Insurance Non-Renewals: Insurance companies are being a lot more selective about the location and the condition of the houses they insure, declining to cover homes in coastal areas or with older roofs or water heaters. The bill that Rep. Azzinaro and I passed requiring 60 days' advance notice will help homeowners find alternative insurance coverage and find tradespeople if they need to fix something at their house in order to continue insurance coverage.

Spotlight: Youth Mental Health

JUST PASSED THE HOUSE & SENATE

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY PASSED MY BILL TO PRINT SUICIDE PREVENTION AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE HOTLINE NUMBERS ON STUDENT & STAFF IDS

- DIAL 988 - SUICIDE & CRISIS LIFELINE IS AVAILABLE 24/7 TO ANYONE IN CRISIS



GET MONTHLY UPDATES AT
[VICTORIA4RI.COM/NEWSLETTER](https://victoria4ri.com/newsletter)

VICTORIA
GU

State Senate
— District 38 —

988 on Student & Staff Ids: Last week the General Assembly passed a bill Rep Earl Read & I sponsored to put suicide prevention and substance use crisis hotline numbers directly on student and school staff ID cards. At a time when young people are facing growing mental health challenges, we need to promote awareness of resources like 988.

The General Assembly also passed a youth crisis response service bill that codifies a successful pilot program into law. The program helps kids in crisis by getting them fast, specialized care with behavioral health clinicians (avoiding unnecessary emergency room visits) and connecting families to ongoing support.

Thank you to constituents who wrote to me about the importance of funding 988: This year, the Senate also advanced a separate bill by Senator Melissa Murray to protect the long-term funding of Rhode Island's 988 crisis line and BH Link services. More than 90% of 988 calls are resolved through phone support alone, connecting people with trained counselors before a crisis escalates. The bill stalled in the House, but we hope to pass it next year. [More info here](#)

Looking ahead: Vote for the Green Bond this Nov & Op-Ed on Managed Retreat



We got an extra \$5 million for climate resiliency in the Green Bond which will be on the ballot in November! Annually, each town can apply for grants from this pool of funding to strengthen their infrastructure. One example: Westerly received funding for a flood wall around a pump station for the wastewater treatment plant.

Managed Retreat: These photos I took in South Kingstown show how shoreline armoring—like rock walls and elevated structures—disrupt the dynamic beach ecosystem and make it harder for people to walk along the beach. As sea levels rise and more coastal property owners build hard structures to protect against erosion, the public part of the beach gets narrower, and in these pictures, it has become impossible to pass along the shoreline.

That's why we need to plan ahead before the next major storm. **Instead of repeatedly rebuilding in areas that face increasing flood and erosion risks, towns can identify safer places for homes and infrastructure over the long term.** Read more about our work to help Rhode Island communities prepare for rising seas and protect public access to our shoreline:

Next rail advocates meeting: June 22nd 6pm @ Westerly Library

Budget Highlights

- 62-65 year old early retirees will now get the same **exemptions from Social Security tax** as people 65 and older. Seniors still must have incomes under \$107,000 for single filers and \$133,750 for married filers in tax year 2025, to qualify.
- **Child Tax Credit** - see [this press release](#)
- **Rural Health Transformation Grant** - RI received over \$150 million in the first year of this federal program and will use it to implement innovative programs like Community Paramedicine - [see this website for more information](#). Stay tuned for more healthcare highlights and impacts of HR1 on our healthcare system

Read the full budget press release

Senate Highlights

- **Labor Protections:** We passed many noteworthy bills like [S-2921](#) to give domestic workers the same protections under the Fair Employment Practices Act (FEPA) as other Rhode Island workers.
- **Immigration bills:** see [this press release](#) and [another for protecting constitutional rights](#)
- **Education Funding Formula:** only minor changes this year by increasing the “student success factor” - which is an additional amount of funding for each low-income student - from 40% to 43%. We will need to monitor the [new Senate commission to study the funding formula](#), specifically the one suggested by the Blue Ribbon Commission

- **Status of CRMC reform bill:** The bill that passed last year required the Governor to appoint members with expertise in coastal matters. There are some new members that the Senate confirmed this year with expertise with civil engineering, coastal wetlands, law, etc. but it remains to be seen whether the political dynamic will change and I still support the overall reform that would restructure CRMC so it's similar to DEM, with a staff and director making the decisions instead of a politically appointed all-volunteer council.
- **Status of Bottle Deposit & Recycling bills:** The bill that passed last year began the first stage which is a needs-assessment to look at our recycling system as a whole. That is still in progress



Legislative Grant for Neighbors Helping Neighbors - South County

Proud to announce a legislative grant to **Neighbors Helping Neighbors Rhode Island**

They are dedicated to helping low-income homeowners in South County stay safe and secure in their homes by providing essential, often life-changing home repairs at no cost to eligible families. From roof repairs and wheelchair ramps to plumbing, electrical fixes, and structural safety improvements, their volunteer-driven work ensures neighbors/seniors can remain in the homes they love.

Legislative Grant for Ocean Community YMCA

Proud to provide a legislative grant this year to the Ocean Community YMCA, an organization that has been part of our community for generations and has made a lasting impact on so many local families. From youth programs to fitness, childcare, and community support, Ocean Community YMCA continues to be a place where people of all ages can learn, grow, and connect.

I'm especially excited about the recent upgrades to the basement level, including the renovated gym, new makerspace, and social/gaming area for kids and teens. These kinds of investments create safe, engaging spaces for young people to build friendships, explore new interests, and stay active right here in our community.



Westerly High School Graduation

It was an honor to join Westerly High School's graduation on Friday and celebrate the Class of 2026.

Westerly students are doing incredible things: culinary students created a food



rescue program that helps local families, more students than ever are gaining hands-on career skills through CTE programs, and the AP exam passing has risen dramatically, earning the school Gold status on the AP Honor Roll. These achievements are helping students graduate ready for college, careers, and service to their community.

Community Chats: Tea with Rep. Tina Spears

Glad to join Representative Spears for her monthly chats at Caf Bar in Charlestown. At the last chat, we talked about the state budget which raises Medicaid reimbursement rates. Low reimbursement rates is one of the reasons why it's harder to attract and retain healthcare providers here, but it's not just Medicaid.

Medicare rates are also lower in RI because it's tied to a federal formula that includes the cost of living. Because the cost of living is higher in our neighboring states, the reimbursement rates are higher there too. The problem in New England, of course, is that doctors can live in Rhode Island and work in CT or MA because they get paid more working across state lines. Since it's a federal



formula, you can reach out to our
Congressmembers with any concerns.

Seniors Farmers Market Benefit Cards

Good news for Rhode Island seniors! From June 1st to Sep 30th or as supplies last, eligible seniors can receive a \$50 benefit card to buy fresh Rhode Island-grown fruits, vegetables, and local honey at participating farmers markets and farm stands. The program supports healthy eating, helps local farmers, and keeps food dollars in our communities. Applications are available through local senior centers and other participating locations listed at dem.ri.gov/sfmnp

[View email in browser](#)