

2024 -- S 2903

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LC005727
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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2024

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A N A C T

RELATING TO MOTOR AND OTHER VEHICLES -- OPERATORS' AND CHAUFFEURS'
LICENSES

Introduced By: Senators DiPalma, Zurier, and Acosta

Date Introduced: March 22, 2024

Referred To: Senate Special Legislation and Veterans Affairs

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Legislative findings.

2 (1) The Rhode Island department of education has temporarily authorized driver education
3 schools to deliver the thirty-three (33) hour community college of Rhode Island approved driver
4 training curriculum in an instructor-led virtual format since April, 2020.

5 (2) The virtual platform used to present the curriculum allows the instructor to see the
6 students on-screen and monitor student engagement by providing spot quizzes, interactive question
7 and answer sessions, class polling and a final exam.

8 (3) Scores for exams taken in a classroom setting (pre-pandemic) and those taken virtually
9 are comparable (90.94 on average for in-person vs. 89.58 on average for virtual).

10 (4) Virtual instruction can provide workable alternatives to students with physical,
11 emotional, or other learning challenges.

12 (5) A virtual instruction option promotes greater accessibility to the curriculum advancing
13 equity and inclusion.

14 (6) A virtual option can be particularly important in rural areas or Rhode Island
15 communities where no classroom instruction is available.

16 SECTION 2. Section 31-10-20 of the General Laws in Chapter 31-10 entitled "Operators'
17 and Chauffeurs' Licenses" is hereby amended to read as follows:

18 **31-10-20. Driver education course requirement before licensing.**

1 (a) No limited-instruction permit or license shall be issued to any person not more than
2 eighteen (18) years of age unless that person shall have successfully completed a course of
3 instruction as provided in § 31-10-19, or a similar course of instruction, conducted in a classroom
4 setting or in an instructor-led virtual format, recognized by the state board of education as
5 equivalent to it. However, any person who is over eighteen (18) years of age and has been a holder
6 of a motor vehicle operator's license issued to that person by any other state, territory, or possession
7 of the United States, or any other sovereignty for a period of one year immediately prior to his or
8 her application for a license under this chapter shall not be required to comply with the provisions
9 of this section.

10 (b) Commencing on July 1, 2004, no limited-instruction permit or license shall be issued
11 to any person not more than eighteen (18) years of age unless that person shall have successfully
12 completed a course of instruction as provided in § 31-10-19, or a similar course of instruction in
13 another state recognized by the state board of education as equivalent to it. In determining whether
14 a course is equivalent, the state board of education shall at a minimum require: (1) That the course
15 consist of at least thirty-three (33) instructional hours that substantially conform with the current
16 curriculum utilized by the instructor(s) at the Community College of Rhode Island, including a
17 minimum of three (3) hours of instruction focusing upon specific Rhode Island traffic laws, the
18 specific requirements of the Rhode Island graduated-licensing statute in § 31-10-6, and eight (8)
19 hours specifically for instruction on the effects of alcohol and drugs on a driver. All driver's
20 education programs shall include information concerning the Revised Uniform Anatomical Gift
21 Act, chapter 18.6.1 of title 23, and information on donor cards pursuant to the applicable provisions
22 of chapter 18.6.1 of title 23; (2) That the instructor holds a valid teacher's certificate; (3) That the
23 instructor satisfactorily completes at least a three-credit (3) course in traffic safety education at an
24 accredited institution of higher education; and (4) That the program does not offer outside the
25 classroom road test instruction or driving lessons to Rhode Island students. However, any person
26 who is over eighteen (18) years of age and has been a holder of a motor vehicle operator's license
27 issued to that person by any other state, territory, or possession of the United States, or any other
28 sovereignty for a period of one year immediately prior to his or her application for a license under
29 this chapter shall not be required to comply with the provisions of this section.

30 (c) The driver's education course and driver's license examination shall include material
31 pertaining to a driver's rights and responsibilities when stopped by a law enforcement officer as
32 explained during the driver education course, including, but not limited to, rights provided to
33 drivers pursuant to chapter 21.2 of title 31, the "comprehensive community-police relationship act
34 of 2015."

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

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EXPLANATION
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
OF

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- 1 This act would authorize driver education schools to offer the driver training curriculum in
- 2 a classroom setting or an instructor-led virtual format.
- 3 This act would take effect upon passage.

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