

**ACLU OF RI POSITION: AMEND**

**TESTIMONY ON 21 – S 285,  
AN ACT RELATING TO EDUCATION – RHODE ISLAND SCHOOL-TO-CAREER  
TRANSITION ACT OF 1996  
March 3, 2021**

The ACLU of RI appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony on this piece of legislation which would implement an “individual career and academic plan (ICAP)” for all students in grades six through twelve. We believe it is an important goal to provide students with support as they consider and approach higher education and career opportunities, but we do wish to raise some caveats about the way such a process gets implemented.

This bill could have the very positive effect of requiring school districts to provide some meaningful level of information about career options for students who are not interested in college, and who don’t know how they might apply, for example, to a good union apprenticeship program leading to a skilled blue-collar job. There is often far too little guidance or information provided to those teens.

At the same time, it is critical that ICAPs do not become a mechanism whereby students end up being barred or coercively steered away from taking certain curricula based on the information contained in their original plan. The bill requires, for example, that the ICAP include an “intentional sequence of courses that reflect progress toward the postsecondary goals.” Since the ICAP process begins with students as early as sixth grade, a program like this could unintentionally turn into a rigid form of discredited “school tracking,” where students are set on a career path at a too-early age that deprives them in later years of important educational opportunities for careers that were not part of the original plan. Therefore, the annual plan updates envisioned by the bill must be reviewed as vigorously as the original plan.

To avoid duplicative efforts, the committee should also consider how ICAPs fit in with current state regulations providing for individualized student plans. IEP students, for example, already have transition planning and are provided with Individual Learning Plans. And, as parents and guardians who have students with these plans can often attest, the success of comprehensive student planning is often contingent upon a substantial apportioning of resources. Thus, in providing students with a type of “roadmap” for them to reach their goals, it is essential that such initiatives have significant resources and support services – ranging from tutoring opportunities to FAFSA guidance – behind them.

Thank you for your consideration of our views.

Submitted By: Hannah Stern, Policy Associate