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Rhode Island Democrats back — then step away from — mandate that would double state income tax on unvaccinated

CHRIS PANDOLFO | April 20, 2022



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Rhode Island Democrats are distancing themselves from an extreme vaccine mandate bill that would double the state income tax on unvaccinated residents and fine parents of unvaccinated children.

Two state senators who had co-sponsored the bill introduced by Democratic state Sen. Sam Bell on March 1 have since removed their names from the legislation, WJAR-TV reported Tuesday.


Bell's vaccine mandate would require every state resident who is at least 16 years old and is eligible to take a COVID-19 vaccine to get immunized. Minors under 16 would also be required to be immunized, and their parents or legal guardians would be responsible for ensuring compliance with the mandate.

Unvaccinated residents would be fined \$50 monthly for noncompliance and "shall owe twice the amount of personal income taxes" levied by the state. Vaccinated parents of unvaccinated children would be forced to pay the fine and have their income taxes doubled.

The bill would also require employers to mandate vaccination for in-person work in the state and would impose a fine of \$5,000 for every violation.

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The legislation was referred to the state Senate Health and Human Services



committee after it was introduced, and there has been no action on it 

According to WJAR, state Sens. Jonathon Acosta and Tiara Mack have removed their names from the bill after initially co-sponsoring it. The Democratic lawmakers did not explain why when the outlet reached them for comment.


Bell declined an interview with the local news station but said he believed there is more support for a universal vaccine mandate than people realize.



On Monday, Bell cited a [Boston Globe report](#) on a survey that found Rhode Island ranks No. 6 in the nation for residents who support a universal COVID-19 vaccine mandate, arguing for Democratic Gov. Daniel McKee to support his bill.

"With @DanMcGowan reporting that Rhode Islanders still strongly support a universal vaccine mandate, despite the McKee Administration pushing hard for the surrender policy, it's time for us to pass my mandate bill," Bell [tweeted](#). "Cases are rising again. Surrender isn't working."

Sam Bell 
@SamuelWBell 

With [@DanMcGowan](#) reporting that Rhode Islanders still strongly support a universal vaccine mandate, despite the McKee Administration pushing hard for the surrender policy, it's time for us to pass my mandate bill. Cases are rising again. Surrender isn't working.


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The survey, conducted by the [COVID States Project](#), found that 55.3% of Americans nationally support a vaccine mandate.

President Joe Biden's administration implemented a federal vaccine mandate on employers with more than 100 employees via executive order

last year, but the mandate was struck down by the U.S. Supreme Cour 

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