

Education Recap



Jan. 31 – Feb. 6, 2025

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SESSION STATUS

At 1:06 p.m. on Wednesday, February 5, 2025, the House stands adjourned until Monday, March 17, 2025, at 12:00 p.m., unless sooner recalled by the Speaker.

At 12:33 p.m. on Wednesday, February 5, 2025, the Senate recessed until Monday, March 24, 2025, at 1:00 p.m. unless sooner recalled by the President Pro Tempore.

UPCOMING SESSION DAYS

House

March 17-19, 24-26
April 7-9, 22-24
May 5-7, 12-14
June 2-4, 9-11, 16-18, 23-27, 30
Sept. 22-24 (NV), 29-30
Oct. 1, 6-8, 27-29
Nov. 17-19
Dec. 8-10 (NV), 15-17

Senate

March 24-26, 31
April 1-2
May 5-7, 12-13
June 2-4, 9-11, 23-30

The Education Recap is a comprehensive weekly report on legislative and executive actions on education-related legislation in Pennsylvania state government, as compiled and edited by PLS. Additional information, including video, transcript and testimony, is available to [PLSGovTrac](https://www.plsgovtrac.com) users. For more information, contact sales@mypls.com.

Press Conferences

PLS coverage of Capitol events including press conferences, bill signings and media availabilities

GOV. SHAPIRO PRESENTS HIS 2025-2026 BUDGET PROPOSAL

By Zoe Buchmann, Pennsylvania Legislative Services | February 4, 2025

Gov. Josh Shapiro held his third annual budget address today in the House Chamber.

Gov. Shapiro thanked Lt. Gov. Austin Davis, House Speaker Johanna McClinton (D-Philadelphia), Senate President Pro Tempore Kim Ward (R-Westmoreland) and Republican and Democratic leadership of both chambers for convening a special session and for the honor to address the General Assembly. He remembered the late Rep. Matthew Gergely (R-Allegheny), stating, “We continue to lift up his family in prayer and may Matt’s memory be a blessing.”

Gov. Shapiro recognized his cabinet and senior team and extended a special welcome to his wife, First Lady of Pennsylvania Lori Shapiro. He thanked his team for their work “to lift up our fellow Pennsylvanians who are not powerful enough to have a seat in this room, but whose problems have become our priorities.” He noted that when he delivered his first address two years ago, he became the first governor in years to address a divided legislature. He continued that in the 700 days since that address, he has traveled all across the state and has stood with Pennsylvanians “in times of triumph and tragedy,” highlighting the recent Superbowl entry of the Philadelphia Eagles and the tragic plane crash last Friday. He added, “Our thoughts and prayers are with the families of the victims in that terrible plane crash.” He stated that through the tragedy, he has seen what makes Pennsylvania special, “our resilience and our willingness to band together, to make it through tough times, neighbor helping neighbor” and every level of the government working together. He emphasized that in the past two years, the legislature has worked together “to get stuff done,” solved problems, focused on common sense and delivered “real results to make a real difference in Pennsylvanian lives.” He said, “I am proud of that work and you should be too.”

Gov. Shapiro reported that 170,000 more Pennsylvanians are working today compared to two years ago. He continued that 12,000 new apprentices have enrolled in programs and that the state has attracted over \$3 billion in private sector investment and has become “the top state in the northeast for regional economic competitiveness.” He highlighted the senior tax cuts, which allowed seniors, like his guest Bob Coleman, to stay in their homes. He added, “Our families have \$136 million back in their pockets because we made childcare more affordable,” and stressed the \$11 billion investment in public education. He addressed several other initiatives including, free breakfast for school kids, permit processing, elimination of backlogs and reductions of waitlists for life-changing services. He asserted that with the “wise investments,” the state still has billions in surplus at a time when neighboring states are facing budget deficits. He also cited decreases in violent crimes and more bridge repair projects, due to “both Democrats and Republicans” having voted for “commonsense budgets that solve real problems” in the last two years.

Gov. Shapiro addressed the political change in the last election with President Donald Trump being sworn into office, having both the U.S. Senate and the U.S. House under Republican control. He contrasted that Pennsylvania voters returned to a Republican-controlled state Senate and a Democratic-controlled House with the same margins during the same election cycle. He argued that the voters have shown they want more of what has been done and “to get more stuff done.” He explained that his administration has worked to cut costs and use funds more wisely,

pointing to last year's comprehensive review of every program offered in the state by the Budget Secretary. He indicated that the review identified inefficiencies and costs that can be eliminated and resulted in the creation of three agencies to address those issues. He stated that the 2025-2026 budget incorporates those savings by sunseting programs that are duplicative and do not work. He added that he has also directed the Secretary of the Department of General Services to conduct the "first-ever" review of every space the state owns or leases. He asserted that by using buildings owned by the state effectively and reducing the reliance on external parking and office leasing, the state is going to save tens of millions of dollars over the next years. He noted that saving money provides opportunities for more investments.

Gov. Shapiro acknowledged that they have not "shied away from hard conversations or solving complex problems," like the public school funding issue. This, he said, resulted in a new funding formula guaranteeing every Pennsylvanian has access to a thorough and efficient system of public education. He recounted his visit to Harrison-Morton Middle School to illustrate the work that has been done to fund the Allentown School District. He brought up the conversation he had with a student to highlight efforts to increase teacher certification and address the teacher shortage. He stated that the state has been able to put more teachers in classrooms, expand resources available to students and teachers and provide new pathways for over 75,000 young people to attend vocational-technical (vo-tech) and career and technical education (CTE) classes. He explained that his budget continues that work, investing an additional \$526 million through the adequacy formula, stressing that it is the "exact same number we agreed to last year." He continued that the budget also includes provisions to support school repairs, mental health, free breakfast, student-teacher stipends and special education programs.

Gov. Shapiro addressed the health care crisis, highlighting past reforms to bring transparency to how pharmacy benefit managers (PBMs) operate to protect small and independent pharmacies throughout the communities. He discussed the energy technology developments outside of Pennsylvania, underscoring efforts last year to allow companies to invest in carbon capture and energy innovation. He continued that they also stopped "forcing" the Pennsylvania State Police (PSP) to compete with the Department of Transportation (PennDOT) by decoupling that funding for the first time "in over 50 years." With the new funding, he asserted that the state is training 800 new troopers, fixed 12,000 miles of roadway and repaired more poor-condition bridges "than any other state in the entire country." He added that these are just some examples of the problems the legislature and the Governor's Office have been able to solve together, expressing pride in the laws, initiatives and the quality of the legislation "and of the fact that we are solving problems that have seemed so out of reach in this building for so long."

Gov. Shapiro called for the regulation of skill games, "because if we want Pennsylvania to compete and win, we need to take some of the money going to these slots and put it in our state coffers." He explained that there are 70,000 unregulated skill game terminals across the state, each of which undermined the Lottery funds, "punishing our seniors" by not contributing to the critical services the Lottery funds provide for seniors. He emphasized that the Pennsylvania Lottery has lost an estimated \$200 million over the last five years, primarily due to unregulated skill games. He said that "our seniors deserve better," therefore he is charging the Gaming Control Board (PGCB) with regulating skill games and treating them like any other video gaming terminal. He stated that the revenue will go towards filling the funding gap for older adults caused by the unregulated games and providing an influx to the general fund to "strengthen our commonwealth and speed our rise."

Gov. Shapiro pointed out that skill games are not the only issue that is "long overdue" to regulate and tax, noting that adult-use cannabis should also be regulated to protect the interests of the state. He reported that 24 states have already legalized adult-use cannabis, including neighboring states. He said that "as a father of four and as a former chief of law enforcement officer" this decision was difficult, but added that after studying the impacts, he now understands the choice between continuing the black market of drug dealing versus a highly-regulated industry with protections in place for children, that the latter is better. He added that business owners in New Jersey, Maryland and New York have indicated that 60% of customers are from Pennsylvania, highlighting the loss of revenue without regulations. He cited that over the first five years, regulating the market would bring in \$1.3 billion in new revenue. He asked the legislators to come together and send a bill to his desk that legalizes adult-use cannabis and expunges the records of people who have been convicted for nonviolent possession of small amounts of marijuana. He added that he wants a bill that sets "reasonable regulations, protects public safety and gives communities that suffered from the criminalization of cannabis an opportunity to succeed."

Gov. Shapiro revisited the work that has been done to make Pennsylvania more competitive, including the Main Street program and the plans to revitalize Pittsburgh. He said, "We are reforming our government to finally move at the speed of business." He highlighted the permitting process achievements and the fast-track process for major economic developments. He stated that thanks to the work that has been done to attract companies to relocate to Pennsylvania, the state has landed more opportunities, businesses and events, like the NFL draft in Pittsburgh as well as the FIFA World Cup, the MLB All-Star Game and the PGA Championship. He added, "My budget ensures those epic events have the resources they need."

Gov. Shapiro emphasized investments in tourism and called to build on that foundation by expanding the Lehigh Gorge State Park to include the Glen Onoko Falls trail, creating Pennsylvania's first underground state park at Laurel Caverns. He added that his budget looks to the future, through supporting initiatives like America250 or expanding access to parks and trails, "all of which are

free.” He explained that looking to the future involves investing in key sectors that will fuel growth. “The economic development strategy identified five pillars of opportunity— energy, agriculture, manufacturing, robotics and technology and life sciences,” the governor explained. He stated that the budget supports all five sectors, specifically life sciences in which the state is poised for “explosive innovation and growth.” He argued that the foundation is there, as the state hosts “world-class” universities and research institutions, like the University of Pennsylvania, the Pennsylvania State University (Penn State) and the University of Pittsburgh (Pitt), adding that “we just need to connect the dots and create an ecosystem where innovators and entrepreneurs can thrive.” He asserted that his budget delivers \$65 million more in innovation, designating \$30 million for life sciences.

Gov. Shapiro emphasized that much of the economic development is intertwined, especially agriculture. He cited 50,000 farms across the state that contribute \$132 billion to the economy and support almost 600,000 jobs. He stressed that they have to support and invest in Pennsylvania’s farmers, no matter the size of the farm. He acknowledged the work in the past year to create the first Agriculture Innovation Fund, which received \$10 million to start, and called for doubling the funding for Agriculture Innovation. He noted that they need to provide farmers with enough resources to ensure that they can stay up-to-date with the latest technology and overcome disasters like the Hi-Path Avian Influenza (HPAI) currently spreading through the country. He added that due to proactive planning, the state has the only Hi-Path recovery fund in the nation with more than \$60 million set aside to support poultry farmers. “We will be there for our farmers because our economic success runs right through our farmlands,” Gov. Shapiro promised.

Gov. Shapiro looked back on the past two years of infrastructure investments, highlighting over \$380 million that was delivered in new funding for roads, bridges and repair projects. He acknowledged that not everyone takes roads to work, but that many also rely on public transportation, which is why he included in his budget provisions to keep mass transit running across the state and to deliver more funding for roads and bridges, especially in rural communities. He stated, “By investing in our roads, bridges and public transit, we not only help Pennsylvanians get where they need to go, we are also attracting business and growing our economy.”

Gov. Shapiro argued that if the state really wants to spur economic growth, one of the most important things it can do is make the tax system more competitive. He pointed out that in his first two years, he has cut taxes “significantly for businesses” and increased the net operating loss for small businesses. He explained that the budget speeds up cuts to the corporate net income tax (CNIT) by two years and provides for a simpler, modern and more streamlined tax system. He also called for closing the Delaware Loophole, which 28 other states have already done. He indicated that together with the progress already made, his plan would cut taxes by \$10.5 billion by 2029.

Gov. Shapiro highlighted the workforce shortage, discussing actions taken to increase the number of people working in the state. He asserted that this budget builds on that work, placing a special emphasis on workforce development. He distinguished between workforce and employment, noting that the unemployment rate is near historic lows and that he aims to address the future of the workforce. He explained that the budget keeps up the scholarships and grants funded last year and fully funds the performance-based formula for Pitt, Penn State and Temple. Additionally, he stated that his budget invests \$6 million in adult literacy to provide a bridge for more opportunities, “to grow our workforce, we need to believe in the potential of all people in Pennsylvania and not shut anyone out.” He underscored First Lady Shapiro’s efforts to increase opportunities for people with intellectual or physical disabilities, including working with Sheetz and Wawa in partnering with the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR). He continued that addressing the affordable childcare issue is also crucial to support and expand the workforce. He said that the budget delivers \$55 million to give childcare workers in Pennsylvania at least \$1,000 in recruitment or retention bonuses. He added that bonuses have been effective in the past, like for municipal police officers, which resulted in 700 new officers after the bonuses were instated. He also called to attention the low wages of direct-care providers, arguing for increased wages, paid time off and access to affordable health insurance.

Gov. Shapiro emphasized the importance of Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs), as they serve as community centers, connect older adults to critical resources and serve on “the front lines of protecting older adults from abuse and neglect.” He discussed his visits to AAAs across the state, noting how underfunded they have been for “too long,” which is why he wants to make a significant investment in AAAs and support seniors. He stressed the “special responsibility” the state has for the seniors who served the nation, as Pennsylvania is home to over 800,000 veterans. He reported that he has directed his team to make housing for veterans a priority going forward and to increase funds for veterans’ needs.

Gov. Shapiro addressed the health care professional shortage, citing one primary care physician for every 222 residents in urban counties. In rural counties, he contrasted, one primary care physician for every 522 residents. He explained that the budget includes provisions to fund more doctors and nurses where they are needed most and expands an existing and successful loan forgiveness initiative to incentivize more health care providers and behavioral health specialists to take jobs across the state. He asked the legislature to pass the bill on giving full practice authority to highly-educated, qualified nurse practitioners that passed the Senate last year on a bipartisan basis.

Gov. Shapiro said, “The floor of our wage structure in Pennsylvania is too damn low,” being stuck at \$7.25 an hour for the last 16 years. He called on the Senate to raise the minimum wage to \$15 an hour, like most neighboring states.

Gov. Shapiro reiterated that the budget places special emphasis on filling critical workforce gaps, as well as making strategic, commonsense investments. He added that it also solves “real problems” including health care problems, like providing additional funding to allow the state’s research institutions to conduct research into neurodegenerative diseases. He also indicated that the budget leverages \$10 million from the state to draw down an additional \$26 million in federal matching funds to provide immediate relief to Pennsylvania hospitals and invests another \$10 million in state funds to help meet their needs. He called on reforming the way private equity functions in the health care system by requiring pre-transaction notifications for all sales, mergers, acquisitions and bankruptcy claims, empowering the Office of the Attorney General to review these intentions with the community’s best interest at the forefront. He additionally called for an end to leaseback arrangements, pointing out that both chambers have sponsored legislation in a bipartisan effort to make these reforms. He said, “Pass the bills, put them on my desk and stop letting private equity take advantage of our health care system.”

Gov. Shapiro addressed the importance of improving maternal health, pointing to work done over the last two years to address maternal mortality. He argued, “When it comes to postpartum depression, moms in need are not getting the help they deserve.” Therefore, he explained, he is directing the Department of Health (DOH) to work with health care providers across the state to implement universal postpartum screenings for moms, train doctors, nurses and health care professionals on how to more quickly identify postpartum depression, speed up referrals to mental health professionals and create a resource registry for families. Gov. Shapiro stressed, “Let’s end the stigma around postpartum depression just like we have worked to end the stigma around mental health.”

Gov. Shapiro celebrated the achievements in treating mental health in Pennsylvania but noted that they have also found a loophole, as insurance companies do not cover mental health services for students when they are offered inside school buildings. He argued for closing the loophole and providing more transparency in pricing in health care. He added that his budget invests \$4 million in the Pennsylvania Health Care Cost Containment Council (PHC4) to develop an All-Payer Claims Database which will collect medical, pharmacy and dental claims from private and public insurers to make them publicly available. He also called for enshrining the protections of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) under federal law into state law. He argued that the protections are working for Pennsylvanians and that once the ACA disappears, health care costs will “dramatically increase” for everyone.

Gov. Shapiro acknowledged his Lightning Plan to secure the state’s energy future. He explained that it is backed by environmental groups, the building trades, chambers of commerce, consumer organizations and others, as it takes steps to increase energy production, explore pathways to renewable energy and grow the economy. “The time for action is now,” the governor remarked.

Gov. Shapiro announced that in April, his administration will certify over \$1 billion in property tax relief through the homestead and farmstead exclusion. He outlined his plan to increase affordable housing by investing \$10 million to help first-time home buyers cover closing costs, staffing up the State Planning Board to help local communities fix their permitting, zoning and code enforcement issues, creating an Interagency Council on Homelessness, increasing the Pennsylvania Housing Affordability and Rehabilitation Enhancement Fund (PHARE) by an additional \$10 million to reach \$110 million by the end of 2028, sealing eviction records if the person was not actually evicted and investing \$50 million to create a new statewide housing repair fund.

Gov. Shapiro emphasized the work of the fire departments across the state, underscoring the lack of resources to support their work. He explained that his budget creates a new competitive funding stream of \$30 million in grants, incentivizes fire companies to collaborate and share services, creating a pilot program to help municipal fire companies work together and covers cancer screenings for firefighters every year. He added, “We need to have their backs.”

Gov. Shapiro revisited the achievements of providing PSP with dedicated funding and argued that they have to continue that commitment in this budget by adding four more cadet classes for PSP. He added that the budget also supports correction officers, reducing the strain on them and giving them more resources. He noted that the investments have been working, as violent crime is down across Pennsylvania. He explained that understanding that investment is part of that success is crucial, but so is the work of community groups. He reported that the budget will build on past solutions to expand their impacts and make communities safer. He extended special gratitude to Lt. Gov. Davis for his work on connecting state funding and organizations.

Gov. Shapiro reiterated his plans for the future of Pennsylvania— good schools for all children, growing the economy and cutting costs for people across communities, cutting taxes to spur economic growth, making health care and energy accessible and affordable, ensuring children can walk down the streets safely and not giving neighboring states a competitive advantage. He added, “These are commonsense Pennsylvania priorities that I know we all share.”

Gov. Shapiro agreed that some may have different approaches but stressed the importance of working together. He acknowledged that “there are some people in this room who will feel the need to just be reflexively against whatever I am for,” urging them to “remember, despite the wave nationally, voters sent the same group back here to keep making progress.” He asked members to “resist the temptation to put politics above people,” and to instead “continue to work together to solve more problems.” He

emphasized the traditions that built Pennsylvania, calling for unity and a sense of reverence for old and new heritages. He added, “By staying true to our values, I know we can work together to get more stuff done.”

Gov. Shapiro emphasized, “Pennsylvania is on the rise, let us keep reaching for that horizon, together.”



SENATE GOP LEADERS, CAUCUS REACT TO 2025 BUDGET ADDRESS

Kyle Purchase, Pennsylvania Legislative Services | February 4, 2025

Senate Republican leaders and members of the Senate Republican Caucus provided remarks following Governor Josh Shapiro’s budget address for 2025-2026 in the Senate Majority Caucus Room today.

President Pro Tempore Kim Ward (R-Westmoreland) regarded Gov. Shapiro’s speech as an “informational kind,” and said, “Without a doubt, we can see that Governor Shapiro has a real appetite for spending.” She said the budget would be the “third year in a row we’re going to spend a lot more billions more dollars we don’t have.” She warned the commonwealth cannot “spend money it doesn’t have” nor “all our reserves.” She also criticized the budget proposal for “basing numbers on things that don’t exist,” referring to the proposed legalization of recreational marijuana and skill games regulation. Sen. Ward agreed with the goal of education to “make sure our kids are ready to succeed.” She called for accountability in the education system and said, “Money doesn’t fix everything, it fixes some things, but not everything.” She discussed Gov. Shapiro’s decision to use federal funds to fund mass transit in Philadelphia and his proposal for mass transit funding and countered by saying, “I would bet that most of Pennsylvanians drive to work and use those roads and bridges to get themselves to work and school.” Sen. Ward said she understood the importance of roads and bridges, adding “We need those roads and bridges maintained so that we can get to our destinations without going over detours or potholes.” She discussed the importance of saving money and evaluating and “right-sizing” vacant buildings. She criticized the size of Gov. Shapiro’s staff and their increase in budget and said, “Governor Wolf had 12.” She concluded, “You want to go out and make everybody happy, and everybody love you, but the fact of the matter is that is not all going to happen because we don’t have the money.”

Senate Majority Leader Joe Pittman (R-Indiana) said, “It is human nature to be all things to all people, but it’s not good governance.” He further stated, “What we saw was 90 minutes of wanting to be all things to all people.” He asserted his caucus was being “very straight about the fiscal realities we’re dealing with.” He said the reality was the commonwealth is in a “structural deficit,” and reaffirmed his commitment to working through areas “where we agree on and move beyond areas we cannot agree on.” He also emphasized the importance of fiscal responsibility and noted areas where Gov. Shapiro and his caucus agreed on. He criticized Gov. Shapiro for not mentioning “empowering parents” in his budget address, noting it was mentioned during his first budget, then “in passing during his second budget.” Sen. Pittman said he hopes Gov. Shapiro “still holds true to what he promised on the campaign trail, and that is to figure out ways to empower parents to make decisions for their children’s educational futures.”

Senate Republican Appropriations Committee Chairman Scott Martin (R-Lancaster) offered comments on the budget address and said he believed Gov. Shapiro thought it was a “perceived call out of his General Assembly.” He criticized Gov. Shapiro for “taking a shot at people when we know he’s looking to pick more winners and losers with certain ways that he’s somehow going to save agriculture.” He further commented on Gov. Shapiro’s commenting on avian influenza, in which Sen. Martin said he has been “heavily involved in.” He discussed the budget book Gov. Shapiro released and stated, “Once you open up his budget book and see how he zeroed out that emergency responsibility for this year, as we go into a really severe situation.” He criticized Gov. Shapiro’s “zeal” about the call for raising the minimum wage saying, “If only he had the same zeal for the bills that we’ve set over supporting families that he claimed to support with lifeline scholarships and things of that nature.” He said what “bothered” him most was regarding grid reliability and energy prices. Sen. Martin remarked, “You’re talking about a guy with one stroke of a pen, could repeal his appeal to maintain his power to implement an \$800 million carbon tax on Pennsylvanians and encourage investment to bring more certainty to our environment and to push down energy bills.” He noted some in the media referred to the budget proposal as “frugality,” and he added, “that was the last ‘F’ word I could think of.” He further criticized the proposed budget stating, “I have never seen, in all my years of receiving a budget or listening to how they are going to spend it or how they were going to pay for it, more inflated numbers in terms of revenue in my life over our five year planning period.” He pointed out Gov. Shapiro’s projections are “\$5.1 billion more than the Independent Fiscal Office (IFO).” He echoed the concern Sen. Ward noted regarding taxes “that don’t exist.” He stated the commonwealth was “driving off a fiscal cliff, and that’s what we’re up against.”

Sen. Pittman opened the press conference to questions from the media.

Where specifically would you like to see less spending?

Sen. Pittman said the area of human services, specifically the utilization of Medicaid and the driving costs to improve the Human Services Fund. He also mentioned the field of education, stating “We are educating fewer students in this commonwealth every year, and we continue to increase funding for public education.” He further stated, “We have to start recognizing that we should be looking at our per pupil allocations in terms of what it is we’re driving out to students on a spending basis.”

Sen. Martin discussed the “demographical challenges” of education and talked about the closure of state correctional facilities which he said would “save us about \$100 million a year each over five years, saving the commonwealth a billion.” He criticized Gov. Shapiro’s proposal stating, “His spending is so intense over the next five years that he’s only booking it as like \$100 million savings over the course of that entire time.” He alluded to Sen. Dave Argall’s (R-Schuylkill) policy committee hearing about vacant buildings and the money spent on maintaining them. He also discussed Medicaid as a “budget driver,” and said, “Who knows where the Trump administration goes in terms of what kind of flexibility you get states to devise plans.”

Are there any “no-cost solutions” that Republicans can get behind?

Sen. Pittman noted the caucus members representing different areas and communities and discussed health care access remarking on “broad concept issues that have interest among members of the caucus.” He further said, “We heard 90 minutes of words today, you’ve got to put words on paper. It’s one thing to talk, it’s another to act.”

Are you saying the administration hasn’t been helping provide details in the past pushing policy?

Sen. Pittman replied, “I would say that, yes.”

Is there a greater chance of agreement in regulating skill games or legalizing marijuana?

Sen. Ward noted those issues have been discussed last year and said, “The governor needs to lead on something and he can’t throw an idea out there which he gave last year and say, let the legislature figure it out and I’ll sign it and go to press conferences all over the state.”

Does the regulation of skill games tax fit your caucus’ version?

Sen. Pittman said the caucus has shown general interest in regulating skill games and reiterated, “We really need a governor that’s engaged in the fine print and details because the details all of this matter.”

Sen. Ward added, “I do think we need to get the House on board because it doesn’t sound to me, they want to do anything.” She further said, “As long as we’re sitting here doing nothing, it’s proliferating into all of our neighborhoods with no regulation and no taxes.”

What are some additional revenue streams Republicans are looking at?

Sen. Martin noted “tax reform in some fashion” to increase Pennsylvania’s competition. He also explained the Rainy Day Fund and the purpose of the fund saying, “It’s all one-time money and it behooves us all to look at where we can make improvements on spending.”

What is your reaction to the governor’s proposed changes to the Corporate Net Income Tax (CNIT)?

Sen. Martin said, “We’ve already been on that path before he got here.” He noted negotiations with former governor Tom Wolf. He talked about the reporting aspect and explained what it may mean to businesses.

Should the state be more conservative in its budget in anticipation of federal cuts?

Sen. Pittman said, “I don’t think there’s anything to do with the federal cuts.” He voiced his optimism saying, “Once the Trump economy takes root, we’ll be just fine.” He added, “We can’t rest our world, and I think what we need to do, the more we act now, is to make more conservative budgeting in revenue and expenditure.” He noted, “Everybody except the governor today acknowledged the structural deficit.” He reiterated his confidence in the “Trump economy.”

What is the right number in the Rainy Day Fund?

Sen. Martin said rating agencies would give numbers, but said a “bigger question that should be asked is, where do you fall?” He remarked on the “immediate threat” of the fund being “wiped out completely.”



HOUSE REPUBLICANS RESPOND TO GOV. SHAPIRO'S BUDGET ADDRESS

By Julia Walters, Pennsylvania Legislative Services February 2, 2025

House Republicans Caucus members gathered at the Lt. Governor's Balcony in the Main Capitol, giving their response to Gov. Josh Shapiro's budget address.

House Republican Leader Jesse Topper (R-Bedford) remarked on the governor's budget address, stating it is "unsustainable" and "spends too much" to drive Pennsylvania's economy forward. He expressed his frustration in competing with states such as Ohio and West Virginia over energy production, stating Pennsylvania is "losing." Rep. Topper specifically called upon the governor to get rid of the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) and "ensure nothing ever takes its place." He continued that "our economic trends are showing the dangerous shift in our demographics in Pennsylvania," noting that while he "loves" seniors, expanding the workforce to enhance its strength is another need.

House Appropriations Committee Republican Chairman Jim Struzzi (R-Indiana) noted Gov. Shapiro's budget proposal "increases to \$51.4 billion over the next year," noting a 7.5% increase from last year. He broke that down by saying it's about \$141 million per day, \$5.8 million per hour and \$98,000 per minute. "We only expect revenues to grow by \$1.3 billion, so where is that money coming from," he asked. Rep. Struzzi answered his own inquiry and said new taxes proposed by Gov. Shapiro and \$1.6 billion from the "Rainy-Day Fund" will account for the increase in spending, echoing Rep. Topper's comments stating it is "not sustainable." Rep. Struzzi said the Rainy-Day Fund will be "gone in two years" and Pennsylvania will see a budget deficit as a result of the governor's budget requests. He said spending has increased "dramatically" over the past decade and needs to be "reined in" before meeting the needs of the commonwealth. "We will break this budget down further during the appropriations hearings coming up in a few weeks," Rep. Struzzi said.

House Republican Whip Tim O'Neal (R-Washington) said the governor's budget proposal is "just the repeat of the same failed policies," noting a decline in business startups and Pennsylvania ranking as "33 in employment." He said retaining skilled workers, lowering taxes and a new energy plan "that prioritizes affordability, reliability and economic growth" would help Pennsylvania "fully reach its potential." Rep. O'Neal noted the governor stated saving Pennsylvanians \$21 billion in energy fees, though he said, "I can guarantee you there's nobody across the commonwealth that's expecting their bill to go down." He acknowledged Pennsylvania sits on a large reserve of energy but criticized Gov. Shapiro for "handicapping" the natural gas industry. He called for investing in "base load energy" and building more gas power plants rather than "subsidizing unreliable, expensive energy sources from China." Rep. O'Neal called for RGGI to be overturned and for no additional carbon tax proposals, stating, "You cannot tax to spend your way to economic growth."

Rep. Topper opened up the press conference to questions from the media.

Do you support Gov. Shapiro's revenue initiatives such as regulating skill-based games and cannabis legalization?

Rep. Topper said he believes they need to be "very cautious in projecting revenue that are not yet legal nor regulated." While he acknowledged skill-based games should be investigated, he stated his belief in the tendency to "over-project" the amount of revenue projected from skill-based games and legal cannabis. Rep. Topper said a "five-party deal" should be worked out on these issues to avoid holes in the budget.

What comments do you have on the proposal for education spending, specifically for low-income schools?

Rep. Topper stated he has been in the Capitol for "over a decade," and he has seen education funding increase every year. "We also need to make sure, in addition to increasing dollars to public schools, is to ensure that each and every child has access to a high-quality education, even if public school is not the right option for that," he said. He noted other schooling options such as homeschool, charter schools and private schools. Rep. Topper stated that more "transformative change" policies are needed in the education system rather than only spending money.

What are your comments on Gov. Shapiro's transportation funding proposal?

Rep. Topper replied, "Once again, there has to be policy and reform that goes along with any funding." He acknowledged that while infrastructure is a key priority, other reforms are needed. He again referenced a five-party deal to ensure equality in all areas of the commonwealth.

How easy or difficult will it be to get a five-party agreement?

Rep. Topper said only Gov. Shapiro has the ability to facilitate a five-party agreement, and he does not want to speak for the governor on that issue.

Besides pulling out of RGGI, what is the number one energy-focused goal?

Rep. Topper responded that “getting rid of the regulations that are really hampering the industry” is his main energy-focused goal. He mentioned the “base-load capacity,” stating Pennsylvania should use more natural gas resources rather than initiating policies that “stand as an impediment” to natural gas. Rep. Topper also stated any other policies containing carbon tax plans “provide instability in the market.”

Is there any part of Gov. Shapiro’s energy plan you support?

Rep. Topper said he believes government needs to “step back and allow the market to work” but that the Republicans will “work with the governor on any part of the plan that we agree with them on.”

Is there a rate of spending Republicans would be most comfortable with?

Rep. Topper replied, “Until we see some policies that will move the economy forward, it's really not about how much we spend.”

What are your comments on Gov. Shapiro’s health care proposals?

Rep. Topper stated, “The estimates are the estimates.” He continued, “What we can see are what our constituents are feeling the pinch for each and every day, and we can tell that the economy is slowing.”

Is there any interest in pulling funds from other areas to help fund education?

Rep. Topper said that integrating new technology and addressing staffing issues are other ways to transform the education sector. He added that “if we’re going to invest dollars, we need to make sure it’s also investing in the areas that are going to grow our students,” and referenced internal schooling initiatives such as “structured literacy” programs to promote student growth.

What are the initial reactions to the cost-saving plan to potentially close two state prisons?

Rep. Topper said he would “take a look at those” but had no other initial thoughts.

Would you consider raising the state minimum wage, if at all?

Rep. Topper responded, “Raising the minimum wage does not grow the economy.”

What would you cut to create a more balanced budget?

Rep. Topper stated, “We’ll look at that over the next couple weeks at appropriations.” He acknowledged the “good ideas” of the programs Gov. Shapiro proposed but noted its unsustainability.



HOUSE, SENATE DEMOCRATS RESPOND TO GOV. SHAPIRO’S BUDGET ADDRESS

By Dominic Kenny, Pennsylvania Legislative Services | February 4, 2025

House and Senate Democrats gathered to respond to Gov. Josh Shapiro’s budget address, as well as the reaction from the Republican caucus, at a press conference in Room 140 of the Main Capitol today.

Speaker of the House Joanna McClinton (D-Philadelphia) referred to Gov. Shapiro’s budget address as a “bold plan from a visionary who wants to continue to put Pennsylvanians forward.” She lauded the last two state budgets as “successful,” citing increased investment in schools and lower taxes for seniors as achievements. “What you saw in the 2024 budget is going to continue in the 2025 budget, because we have a record of accomplishments for the people,” she said. She praised Gov. Shapiro for his efforts to address housing, gun violence and mass transit. “We have a responsibility in making sure that the outlined priorities Gov. Shapiro shared today are a part of all the concerns and challenges that we face all across Pennsylvania,” she said. “In order for every family and person to thrive, we have to make sure we don’t let up.” She addressed concerns from Republicans regarding increases in spending, asking, “If not now, when? If not us, then who?” She said investments led by Democrats have resulted in more public school teachers, free school breakfasts for children and an increase in citizens staying in the commonwealth and pursuing higher education. She stressed that there is more work to do.

House Majority Leader Matthew Bradford (D-Montgomery), said, “We’ve had two very successful years with a very pragmatic governor who recognizes the challenges of divided government.” He said Democrats in both chambers of the legislature recognize the difficulties they face in order to build on the work that they’ve done. He emphasized that Pennsylvania needs to be more competitive by growing the economy and making smart investments. He stressed the need to reach across the aisle and work with

Republicans, citing Democrats' willingness to cut taxes for businesses as an example. "House Democrats have led on that, both NOL (net operating loss) reductions, CNI (Corporate Net Income) reductions and now with a proposal to accelerate CNI reductions," he said. "If we're going to that... we need to also make sure that we're making our constitutional obligation to deal with education funding."

Senate Minority Leader Jay Costa (D-Allegheny), said, "I'm pleased that the governor put forth what I deemed to be a serious and comprehensive budget that [addresses] the important things Pennsylvanians want us to talk about." He said Gov. Shapiro's budget touches upon the desire to build upon the growth Pennsylvania has been experiencing in a variety of areas. He emphasized that Pennsylvania needs to maintain its commitment to education. He praised the proposed investments in childcare and community home providers as a "step in the right direction," stressing that more needed to be done. "The Senate Democrats are pleased to join our Democratic colleagues and Gov. Shapiro to tackle the many challenges we have going forward," he said.

House Appropriations Committee Chairman Jordan Harris (D-Philadelphia) said he predicted the Republican response to the Gov. Shapiro's address. He asked Republicans to say what programs they were willing to cut to reduce spending. "Are you willing to tell all of our seniors... that their health care is too expensive for us to cover," he asked. "Are you going to stand in front of parents and tell [them] that their children's education is not important enough?" He said Democrats can not stop the progress they have made over the last two years. "We can't stop because all of these folks are depending on us to make significant investments that help us grow the economy and grow Pennsylvania," he said. He emphasized that Pennsylvania must make targeted and strategic investments that benefit citizens while simultaneously creating a climate that would attract businesses. He lauded Pennsylvania's low unemployment rate and stressed that now is not the time to "cut and run." He said House and Senate Democrats will do their due diligence in the budget process and put their "foot to the pedal" to get it done by the end of June. "Let's not allow political rhetoric to get in the way of all the progress that we've seen that touches everyday Pennsylvanians," he said. "We're going to keep going forward because we see the vision for all Pennsylvanians and all of God's children. To make sure that this dream we tell people about is actualized in this commonwealth"

Senate Appropriations Committee Minority Chairman Vincent Hughes (D-Philadelphia), said, "What we had from the governor today is a calm, thoughtful budget and policy proposal that builds on the successes of the last several years." He lauded the proposal for its tax reductions and lack of "budget-busting" compensation. "It keeps Pennsylvania moving forward," he said. He continued that the proposal touches on "every indicator that means something to the people of Pennsylvania," including putting money back in people's pockets. He said the proposal makes the right investments at the right time. "We're going to adopt the business of doing the work," he stated. He praised Gov. Shapiro for the substance of his address, as well as his "vision to move all of Pennsylvania's people forward." He optimistically compared Gov. Shapiro's demeanor to the "chaos that's happening in Washington, D.C." He said Gov. Shapiro is trying to protect Pennsylvania from what is transpiring in the nation's capital. "We just heard that the executive order for eliminating the U.S. Department of Education has finally been drafted... the cuts for health care, job creation, [and] environmental protection that are looming in Washington could force us back here in a very short amount of time to have another conversation that's very real," he said. "So, let's be about the business... of embracing what we heard from the governor." He warned against heeding Republican concerns about spending, saying, "They always say that." He said there is a legitimate pathway for everything that keeps Pennsylvania moving forward.

The press conference opened to questions from the media.

Is it wise to cut corporate taxes right now?

Rep. Bradford said Democrats are advocating for cutting corporate taxes to address long-term issues facing the commonwealth such as demographic challenges. "From a cashflow standpoint, the commonwealth's economy has never been stronger," he said. He emphasized the need for Pennsylvania to attract and retain both people and businesses, particularly in the western portion of the state, referencing a 10% population decrease in Westmoreland County over the previous decade. He said Democrats are taking a page out of Republican orthodoxy by accelerating cuts in CNI reduction to address long-term needs. "If we're going to lower rates... we're going to close loopholes [and] make sure that everyone's paying their fair share," he said. He argued it was prudent public policy.

Republicans are gravely worried about the deficit projected by the state's Independent Fiscal Office (IFO). How is it that the commonwealth can spend over \$50 billion if we do have that looming?

Rep. Bradford argued that Pennsylvania's economy is very strong "from a cash standpoint." He said Republicans should "take a little look in their mirror if they want to be so worried about these five-year projections." He said previous Republican budgets were not balanced "five minutes out," let alone five years out. He stressed the need for Democrats to remain fiscally responsible. He said Democrats humbly recognize long-term challenges, citing the need to bring the business community on board with tax relief. He emphasized that Republicans need to meet Democrats halfway. "I think the prudent thing is to make those long-term investments that drive those long-term revenues that this commonwealth needs," he said.

Are you confident that you can pass regulated skill games and legalized adult-use cannabis this year?

Rep. Bradford replied that House Democrats have “shown a path forward” on many tough issues. He stressed against relitigating past fights. He said Senate Republicans told them over a year-and-a-half ago that a skill games bill would be coming. He said it is about time Senate Republicans work with Senate Democrats to pass legislation. “We need moderate, prudent [and] pragmatic leadership that’s willing to look for both sides,” he said. He expressed confidence that a skill games bill could be passed. He said that there is a “real diversity of opinions” in the Democratic caucus regarding adult-use cannabis. He said Democrats need to reach across the diversity of their caucus and stop having the same stale fights. He said there would be 102 votes for both a skill games bill and an adult-use cannabis bill. He called on the Senate to show their hand on those issues, along with raising the minimum wage.

Do you think the state needs to be more conservative in the final budget this year due to anticipation of federal cuts?

Rep. Bradford emphasized the importance of being “clear-eyed” about what is going on in Washington, D.C. “Seventy-two hours ago, we were being told that all federal dollars were frozen,” he said. “God knows what the next 72 hours will bring.” He said there were “real concerns” within the caucus regarding leadership in D.C. “We don’t know what the next four years will bring,” he said. “Gov. Shapiro has shown the way. We will take the challenges in front of us and govern.” He said Pennsylvania Democrats have shown that they can get work done in a divided government. He added that it is hard to tell what the impacts of federal policy will be on Pennsylvania. “You do the people’s business, and you leave the acrimony for... the politicians and election season,” he said. “This is the time for governing and serious people.”



GOV. SHAPIRO HIGHLIGHTS CHILDCARE INVESTMENT PLANS

By Zoe Buchmann, Pennsylvania Legislative Services | February 6, 2025

Gov. Josh Shapiro was joined by Secretary of Human Services Val Arkoosh, Sen. Patty Kim (D-Dauphin) and Rep. Justin Fleming (D-Dauphin) today at the CrossPoint Early Learning Center to highlight childcare investments in the 2025-2026 budget proposal.

Suzanne Brubacher, director, CrossPoint Early Learning Center, welcomed Gov. Shapiro and the audience to the CrossPoint Early Learning Center. She emphasized the importance of early childhood care and education, celebrating the investment in the early childcare workforce. She argued it will enable them to recruit and retain high-quality educators and caregivers. She stated that early childhood education professionals are “the workforce behind the workforce.” She thanked Gov. Shapiro “for ensuring those who impact our children’s futures will also not be underestimated.”

Gov. Shapiro thanked CrossPoint and the staff for their work and dedication toward providing a safe and educational environment for young children. He stressed the importance of addressing the workforce crisis across the state, especially in childcare. He reported that there are currently 3,000 unfilled jobs in childcare centers across the state which he wants to address with his budget proposal. He explained that the 2025-2026 budget builds on the past two years of investments in childcare, including expanding the Child and Dependent Care Enhancement Tax Credit. He highlighted that his budget includes \$55 million in workforce recruitment and retention grants to increase childcare availability and childcare workers’ wages. He continued that the \$55 million includes \$1,000 recruitment or retention bonuses for teachers in order to close the teacher shortage across Pennsylvania. He noted that he proposed this a few years ago for police officers, “and lawmakers came together and voted for it.” He added that through the retention and recruitment bonuses, 700 new municipal police officers joined the force across the state. He argued that “this formula works,” emphasizing how “it is time to drive those dollars out to help make sure that we have got childcare workers in our community doing this really important work.” He states that his administration identifies problems and then solves them. “And we solve them on a bipartisan basis,” the governor remarked. He underscored the importance of the topic, stating, “I wanted to be here on my first event post my budget address to make sure you understand just how important you are.” He called on members from both parties to come and work with him on this issue. He invited all teachers and childcare workers to share their stories and passions, “so that we are able to come together and make this happen.”

Megan Gherry, a parent whose children attend CrossPoint Early Learning Center, shared her personal story of relying on the Early Learning Center to take care of her two children while she works. She thanked the team at the learning center for their dedication, highlighting how much her children have learned in their time in a place “where my children are accepted, protected and educated every day.” She noted that her son was diagnosed with autism, which meant she had to ensure that he could go to a place where he would feel safe and where specialized teachers could work with him.

Jennifer Shirk-Weiss, staff member, CrossPoint Early Learning Center, argued that the \$55 million allocation proposed in Gov. Shapiro's 2025-2026 budget proposal will help Pennsylvania's early childhood education (ECE) programs compensate teaching professionals with the end goal being teacher retention. She added that the program would promote high-quality care and high learning outcomes for children while assisting upcoming teachers pursue that career. She stressed that early childhood educators are dedicated to children and families and want to remain in their chosen profession, but that they need a competitive wage that allows them to properly provide for themselves and their families. She thanked Gov. Shapiro for believing in investing in the workforce, for believing in childhood professionals and for supporting "our children's and Pennsylvania's future."

Sec. Val Arkoosh, Department of Human Services (DHS), thanked CrossPoint for inviting them into the center and letting them meet the children. She emphasized the importance of having childcare centers, especially as a working mother. She thanked all childhood care professionals for their hard work, saying, "We are so grateful for what you do every single day." She highlighted the Shapiro administration's commitment to supporting child care providers, including increased funding for the Child Care Works program, which raised reimbursement rates to federal best-practice levels for the first time. She stressed the need for continued investment to expand access to affordable, high-quality child care, support the workforce, and strengthen communities and the economy.

Sen. Kim thanked the staff at CrossPoint for hosting the event. She celebrated Gov. Shapiro's engagement and dedication to his job and to all Pennsylvanians. She shared her personal experience with having to choose between work and having a child, illustrating the high costs of childcare. She added that she understands the struggle and the importance of quality childcare. She called on the legislature to take care of daycare workers and pass the \$55 million budget proposed by Gov. Shapiro.

Rep Fleming emphasized the importance of high-quality child care and early education. He noted his personal experience as a former child advocate and parent, highlighting disparities in child care access across Pennsylvania. He praised the state's \$55 million investment in child care workers, acknowledging it as a significant step while advocating for further support. He expressed gratitude to Gov. Shapiro for prioritizing child care in the budget and reaffirmed their commitment to improving child care accessibility and workforce support in Pennsylvania.

Gov. Shapiro noted that Reps. Dave Madsen (D-Dauphin), Nathan Davidson (D-Dauphin) and Thomas Mehaffie (R-Dauphin) were also in attendance. He emphasized, "This is a delegation that works together, works across party lines and delivers for South-Central Pennsylvania routinely." He opened the floor to questions from the media.

Why is this structure the way it is and why not just increase the reimbursement rates more?

Gov. Shapiro answered that they are doing both and that increasing rates is also important. He explained that they want to give people more tools to be able to recruit teachers and retain them. He reiterated that this structure has been successful in other areas and that the \$1,000 bonus is "going to make a real difference." He expressed hope that lawmakers will continue to come together on child care issues across the board.

Do you think there should be a new criminal investigation into the death of Ellen Greenberg based on recent developments?

Gov. Shapiro expressed sympathy for the Greenberg family and specified that the case was inherited by him at the Attorney General's Office after Philadelphia's initial ruling. He explained that the investigation, along with subsequent reviews by multiple law enforcement agencies, found no evidence supporting homicide or criminal charges. He added that the case was later transferred to the Chester County District Attorney, who reached the same conclusion. He acknowledged the family's grief and emphasized that any new evidence should be directed to the district attorney for further review.

Do you think the medical examiner coming forward now and saying he no longer believes it was a suicide is enough to push this forward?

Gov. Shapiro responded that this is a question for the district attorney in Chester County and that it depends on the evidence not just someone "feeling different." He added that if the medical examiner has new evidence they would like to add, they need to share that immediately. He noted that during the investigation, he invited many people in who indicated they had new information but were never able to actually hand over any additional information.

Can you give your thoughts on Republicans promising to push for school vouchers?

Gov. Shapiro stressed that this is a matter the House Democrats and Senate Republicans need to come together on, noting past disagreements. He explained that he has left some space in the budget negotiations to see if there could be a common ground. He stated that he supports the option of giving poor children and struggling school districts more resources to help them with their education and never at the expense of public education.

What is your response to Republican leaders suggesting that a carbon tax would “hamstring energy producers” and would not make a dent in the overall local climate picture?

Gov. Shapiro answered, “I mean, these guys are like a broken record, they have been saying the same thing for years.” He outlined his proposed energy plan, which has garnered support from various stakeholders, including building trades, environmental groups, consumer groups and industry. He said his goal is to increase energy production in Pennsylvania, lower costs and expand renewable energy options while ensuring reliability and affordability. He emphasized the importance of compromise in passing legislation and criticized those who refuse to engage in productive discussions. He urged Senate Republicans to collaborate and seize the opportunity to strengthen Pennsylvania’s energy sector rather than resisting for political reasons, warning that inaction would lead to higher prices and reduced energy generation.

What do you say to people in your party who are wondering what they can do about what is going on in Washington D.C. or what their response should be?

Gov. Shapiro stated that he cannot speak directly on anything, but that he can make general comments. He acknowledged the unease caused by President Donald Trump’s policies and rhetoric, emphasizing the importance of civic engagement and urging Pennsylvanians to make their voices heard by contacting their representatives. He focused on the nearly \$950 million in federally promised funds for Pennsylvania that had been frozen, affecting environmental and worker protections, and called on U.S. Congress to ensure these funds are released, mentioning the possibility of legal action against the Trump administration. He encouraged constructive and peaceful activism to hold leaders accountable.



Committee News

Comprehensive coverage of the House & Senate public hearings and voting meetings

House Appropriations Committee

02/03/25, 1:15 p.m., Room 140, Main Capitol Building

Julia Walters, Pennsylvania Legislative Services

The committee met to consider several bills.

Chairman Jordan Harris (D-Philadelphia) welcomed everyone to the new legislative session and went over the new committee members.

Minority Chairman James Struzzi (R-Indiana) thanked Chairman Harris, welcomed new Republican members and introduced the bills to consider.

[HB 190](#) - (PN 318) Amends the Public School Code, in school health services, providing for eating disorder awareness and education. Requires a school entity to annually provide information regarding eating disorder awareness and education for pupils in grades six through 12 to parents, guardians and key school personnel. Mandates the information shall be consistent with the educational information and materials and recommendations established under this section. Requires the educational information to be provided to parents, guardians and key school personnel annually via email, first class mail or on the school entity’s publicly accessible website. Requires the Department of Health, in conjunction with the Department of Education, to develop educational information and materials and make recommendations for providing information. Provides for the development of recommendations and for input from the Eating Disorders Advisory Committee which is established under this section. Provides duties for the secretary to establish the Eating Disorders Advisory Committee and appoint members from other entities. Mandates the members of the committee to serve without compensation. Establishes meeting times and educational information and materials and recommendations developed to be provided to school entities within one year after the establishment of the committee. Provides for the development of additions and revisions of regulations. Provides several definitions. Effective in 60 days. (Prior PN: 137). The bill was unanimously **reported as committed**.

[HB 201](#) - (PN 255) Amends the Public School Code, in intermediate units, further providing for powers and duties of the intermediate unit board of directors to acquire land by purchase, lease or gift and for capital subsidy by stating all lease agreements, security agreements, loan agreements and mortgages or any other contacts to be approved by the Secretary of Education. Effective immediately. The bill was unanimously **reported as committed**.

[HB 291](#) - (PN 226) Amends Title 75 (Vehicles), in rules of the road in general, further providing for additional parking regulations. Requires a vehicle standing or parked on the right-hand side of a two-way or one-way highway and a vehicle standing or parked on the left-hand side of the highway to be positioned in the direction of authorized traffic movement with the right-hand wheels and with the left-hand wheels, respectively, of the vehicle parallel to and within 12 inches of the outside line of the buffer area between the pedestrian plaza or pedalcycle lane and parking when there is an on-street pedestrian plaza or a pedalcycle lane adjacent to the right-hand curb of a two-way or one-way highway and the left-hand curb of a one-way or median-divided, two-way highway. Specifies that nothing under this section shall be deemed to prevent a local authority from enacting parking regulations under section 6109 (relating to specific powers of department and local authorities) to provide for a special, alternative or temporary configuration and signage for parking on a highway with an on-street pedestrian plaza or pedalcycle lane. Provides that nothing under this section shall be deemed to apply to the stopping or standing of school buses or school vehicles when receiving or discharging school students, allowing a school bus or school vehicle to stop or stand as close as practicable to the curb or shoulder. Effective in 60 days. The bill was unanimously **reported as committed**.

[HB 324](#) - (PN 272) Amends the Poultry Technician Licensure Law, further providing for collection of samples, for technician requirements, for licensure, for powers and duties of Secretary of Agriculture and for blood sample restrictions. Permits the Secretary of Agriculture to establish licensing and certification standards for the collection of samples and conduct on-site surveillance for diseases through the issuance of a general quarantine order. Permits certified poultry technicians legally able to legally work in the United States to participate, regardless of citizenship status. Changes application for licensure fee from \$5 to \$10. Permits the Secretary of Agriculture to adopt quarantine orders. Effective immediately. The bill was unanimously **reported as committed**.



House Education Committee

02/03/2025, 10:00 a.m., Room 140, Main Capitol
Pennsylvania Legislative Services

The committee held an informational meeting on the Future Ready PA Index and student outcomes.

Chairman Peter Schweyer (D-Lehigh) emphasized the need for a strategic approach to education policy, focusing on understanding the current state of students before making decisions.

Minority Chairman Bryan Cutler (R-Lancaster) acknowledged the importance of improving education in Pennsylvania. He highlighted the need for addressing funding and outcomes. He expressed skepticism towards standardized testing but recognized its role in evaluations.

Carrie Rowe, deputy secretary, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education (OESE), Department of Education (PDE), explained the metrics and impetus behind the Future Ready PA Index. She highlighted its use in determining the performance of schools and addressing their needs.

Chairman Schweyer asked the panel if they noticed any statewide trends. Rowe mentioned modest year-over-year gains in each tested area since the pandemic, with some scores surpassing pre-pandemic levels. Brian Campbel, director, OESE, PDE, noted significant gains in math, small gains in science and flat or slightly decreased reading scores. He highlighted that graduation rates are surpassing pre-pandemic levels.

Rep. Regina Young (D-Philadelphia) asked about the link between schools and their communities. Rowe responded that analyzing data from the Future Ready PA Index helps in making informed decisions about resources and courses by identifying gaps and trends, thereby facilitating multiple pathways for student success through alignment with community workforce needs.

Rep. Young asked if it was important to include community partners in the decision-making process for schools. Rowe said schools that do not involve their communities in the education process do themselves a disservice. She said parents should be involved as well.

Rep. Barbara Gleim (R-Cumberland) asked why the benchmark for the index was 2033. Rowe said that it was due to a Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) requirement.

Rep. Gleim asked why there was a change in the date from 2030. Campbell said the change was due to the two years during the pandemic in which data was not submitted to the federal government.

Rep. Gleim asked what metrics state legislators should be looking at when measuring success. Rowe said that all metrics should be analyzed in a holistic way to address specific needs schools may have.

Rep. Paul Friel (D-Chester) asked how legislative actions, like funding or curriculum changes, have impacted academic results. Rowe emphasized the need for patience in seeing the outcomes of educational policies and investments. He highlighted the importance of structured literacy programs and the hiring of additional staff to improve student performance.

Rep. Milou Mackenzie (R-Northampton) asked if PDE was doing anything to address statewide attendance issues. Rowe described efforts to address absenteeism, including providing toolkits for schools and participating in a joint state committee report on truancy.

Chairman Cutler expressed concerns about whether increased graduation rates truly reflect students meeting career readiness and education standards. He also inquired about changes in standardized testing from PASAs to PSSAs and how PDE addresses that distinction. Rowe responded to concerns about graduation rates by discussing the alternative pathways for students to demonstrate graduation readiness if they do not test proficient on standardized tests. Campbell specified that the decision on whether a student in Pennsylvania should take the PSSA is based on a profile of data points decided by the student's local Individualized Education Program (IEP) team, not a single data point. He mentioned that about six factors, including academic performance and IQ scores, are considered, and highlighted Pennsylvania's approach to data disaggregation for tracking students with IEPs.

Sherri Smith, executive director, Association of School Administrators, praised PDE for their work on the Future Ready PA Index. She acknowledged the challenges in measuring student success equitably across districts. She emphasized the importance of accountability and ongoing improvements in student outcomes. She discussed the potential misalignment between state assessments and the evolving educational landscape.

Dana Bedden, superintendent, Centennial School District, shared his experience working in various Pennsylvania counties, emphasizing the uniqueness of each district's challenges and opportunities. He detailed how he aligned district goals with the Future Ready PA Index upon his arrival at Centennial in 2020. He also mentioned the district's changing demographics and the importance of focusing on growth measures.

Anthony Gabrielle, assistant superintendent, Centennial School District, emphasized the importance of setting educational goals based on the index. He noted that this goal-oriented approach is adaptable to any district by prioritizing teaching and learning.

Rep. Gleim asked about the timeline for updating state assessment standards to better align with educational standards and questioned how to make the process more efficient. Smith discussed the potential for a competency-based education approach in Pennsylvania, critiquing the current state assessments. She advocated for local assessments and a focus on skill development in early education. She also mentioned the need for reevaluation of assessments in light of changes from the U.S. Department of Education and ESSA. Rep. Gleim expressed concern that a 10-year timeline to align school activities with standards is too lengthy.

Rep. Gina Curry (D-Delaware) asked for recommendations to help struggling students catch up following the pandemic. Gabrielle said his district focuses on growth before achievement. He noted the district has surpassed pre-pandemic achievement levels in most areas except science.

Rep. Friel expressed concerns about the reliance on testing indexes and data sets for assessing student progress, questioning the appropriateness of the Future Ready Index as a tool for measuring success. Smith discussed the limitations of using the index as a measuring tool and suggested expanding the criterion for achievement. Bedden echoed Rep. Friel's concern about catering education to standardized tests. Smith stressed the difference between aligning to academic standards and teaching to the test.

Rep. John Schlegel (R-Lebanon) asked if any changes had been made to the index since it was rolled out. Smith said that some changes were made to the goals following the pandemic, but that those were the only changes. Rep. Schlegel suggested school districts release an executive summary highlighting both challenges and improvements within the district.

Chairman Cutler inquired about the overlap between federal, state and local reports and assessments and asked if state law could be reevaluated to make teaching more efficient. Smith discussed the challenges of managing mandates and requirements from federal to state levels. She emphasized the importance of aligning assessments to avoid excessive student testing and highlighted the exhaustive nature of data collection required by different entities.

Chairman Schweyer asked Bedden and Gabrielle if they used information from the index to identify and address educational weaknesses. Bedden confirmed the use of various data points, including celebrating teacher success.

Chairman Schweyer asked about the utilization of recent funding increases by school districts. Smith mentioned a survey of 340 school districts about their funding usage and plans for new programs, promising to share detailed data with the committee.

Maura McNerney, legal director, Education Law Center, emphasized the importance of predictable funding for significant investments in staffing and programs, advocating for the General Assembly to address a \$4 billion adequacy gap within four years. She highlighted the effective use of funds for programs such as tutoring, mental health services and STEM education. She stressed the need for investments in basic and special education funding to keep up with inflation and improve student outcomes.

Sylvia Richbow, parent advocate, Chester Upland School District, shared her personal experience with the Chester Upland School District, detailing how additional funding has positively impacted her children. She highlighted the benefits of increased special education support, after-school tutoring and guidance counseling.

Aaron Riggleman, manager, Government Affairs, Pennsylvania Chamber of Business and Industry, advocated for strengthening accountability for school districts regarding student performance. He stressed the importance of aligning curriculum with workforce needs and maximizing resource efficiency.

Rep. Curry thanked Richbow for her testimony. She discussed her own experience as a parent in a disadvantaged school district.

Rep. Gleim asked for clarification on the funding increase for education. McNerney confirmed it would be a \$500 million increase year-over-year until the funding gap is addressed.

Rep. Gleim asked if the lawsuit that led to the increase in funding specified where the additional funds would come from. McNerney stated that would not be an issue the court would address within its authority.

Rep. Gleim questioned if the adequacy formula had much of an impact on the funding process for Pennsylvania's schools. McNerney said that the formula partly addresses the needs of schools that do not benefit from high property tax funds in their area.

Rep. Gleim argued for an accountability measure, stressing that there was no way to know if the increase in funding had a significant impact. McNerney stressed that "money matters" in terms of improving performance for schools. She stressed the importance of long-term cumulative gains of funding increases.

Chairman Cutler asked how the General Assembly can improve employment outcomes for jobs that don't require a college degree. Riggleman said an increase in exposure via demonstrations or job site visits would increase student interest in technical education. He suggested bringing professionals with private sector experience who are looking to change careers into schools as instructors.

Chairman Schweyer closed the meeting by stressing the validity of all career pathways for students, be it through college or the workforce.



Bullet.in.Points

SBE: RULEMAKING: ACADEMIC STANDARDS AND ASSESSMENT

The State Board of Education announced amendments relating to academic standards and assessment. The final-form rulemaking seeks to update the existing academic standards for Career Education and Work (CEW), Family and Consumer Sciences (FCS) and Economics (ECON). Additional information is available on the *Pennsylvania Bulletin*.

Cosponsor Memos

HCO1016 - Video Surveillance in Child Care Centers

Sponsor

Rep. Jose Giral (D)

Summary

Requires child care centers to install and maintain video camera surveillance systems.

Intro Date

01/13/2025

Last Action

02/06/2025 H - Introduced HB524

HCO1104 - Building a Better Future Grant Program

Sponsor

Rep. Carol Hill-Evans (D)

Summary

Aims to establish the Building a Better Future Grant Program in the Department of Labor & Industry.

Intro Date

01/16/2025

Last Action

02/03/2025 H - Introduced HB455

HCO1212 - School District Cyber Education Programs

Sponsor

Rep. Ryan A. Bizzarro (D)

Summary

Allows a student who wishes to engage in cyber education to choose between a cyber charter school or their home district's cyber program.

Intro Date

01/22/2025

Last Action

02/04/2025 H - Introduced HB480

HCO1388 - LGBTQ+ Inclusive Curriculum**Sponsor**

Rep. Joseph C. Hohenstein (D)

Summary

Aims to mandate the inclusion of the important political, economic, and social contributions of LGBTQ+ individuals in Pennsylvania's K-12 curriculum.

Intro Date

01/31/2025

Last Action

01/31/2025 H - Cosponsor memo filed

HCO1391 - Dual-Language Immersion Programs for K-12 Students**Sponsor**

Rep. Johanny Cepeda-Freytiz (D)

Summary

Requires schools to implement dual-language immersion programs from kindergarten through grade 12, with school districts choosing the foreign language that best reflects the demographics in their communities.

Intro Date

02/03/2025

Last Action

02/03/2025 H - Cosponsor memo filed

HCO1402 - Enhancing Teacher Certification Flexibility: Updating Instructional Certificate Grade Spans and Age Levels**Sponsor**

Rep. Paul Friel (D)

Summary

Modifies Pennsylvania's teacher certification system by revising the grade spans and age levels at which educators are certified.

Intro Date

02/03/2025

Last Action

02/03/2025 H - Cosponsor memo filed

HCO1407 - Nondiscrimination Policies to Protect All Students (Former HB 1997)**Sponsor**

Rep. Nancy Guent (D)

Summary

Creates a clear statewide policy for all public schools to prohibit student discrimination and harassment based on actual or perceived sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, or expression through anti-discrimination and harassment prevention and early intervention policies.

Intro Date

02/03/2025

Last Action

02/03/2025 H - Cosponsor memo filed

HCO1408 - Freedom to Read Act**Sponsor**

Rep. Paul Friel (D)

Summary

Provides a uniform process for book challenge appeals featuring a regional committee of instructional experts.

Intro Date

02/03/2025

Last Action

02/03/2025 H - Cosponsor memo filed

HCO1413 - Civics Education Graduation Requirement

Sponsor

Rep. Joe Webster (D)

Summary

Requires high school students to pass a test identical to the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services naturalization test with a score of at least 60% as a graduation requirement.

Intro Date

02/03/2025

Last Action

02/03/2025 H - Cosponsor memo filed

HCO1414 - Replacement of Keystone Exam with the American College Testing (ACT) Test

Sponsor

Rep. Joe Webster (D)

Summary

Requires that the Pennsylvania Department of Education approve the ACT, without the essay portion, as the state standardized assessment for our high school students and subsequently cease the administration of the Keystone Exam.

Intro Date

02/03/2025

Last Action

02/03/2025 H - Cosponsor memo filed

HCO1415 - Keeping our Youngest Students in School

Sponsor

Rep. Joe Webster (D)

Summary

Prohibits the suspension or expulsion of any child eight years old or younger unless the child poses an imminent threat to others.

Intro Date

02/03/2025

Last Action

02/03/2025 H - Cosponsor memo filed

HCO1416 - Requiring School Libraries**Sponsor**

Rep. Joe Webster (D)

Summary

Requires schools to have a physical space for a library or information center.

Intro Date

02/03/2025

Last Action

02/03/2025 H - Cosponsor memo filed

HCO1417 - Requiring Holocaust Education in Schools**Sponsor**

Rep. Joe Webster (D)

Summary

Requires all Pennsylvania schools to teach about the Holocaust, genocide, and human rights violations.

Intro Date

02/03/2025

Last Action

02/03/2025 H - Cosponsor memo filed

HCO1422 - Temporarily Raising Maximum School Age Due to COVID-19**Sponsor**

Rep. Joe Webster (D)

Summary

Allows the Secretary of Education to have the authority to authorize exceptions to the age cap in public education programs for students who turn 21 through the 2035-2036 school year.

Intro Date

02/03/2025

Last Action

02/03/2025 H - Cosponsor memo filed

HCO1426 - Free Tuition at PASSHE Institutions for School Board Members**Sponsor**

Rep. Joe Webster (D)

Summary

Allows school board members to enroll tuition-free in relevant courses at any Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education (PASSHE) institution.

Intro Date

02/03/2025

Last Action

02/03/2025 H - Cosponsor memo filed

HCO1454 - Charter School Reporting on Enrollment Changes of Students**Sponsor**

Rep. Carol Kazeem (D)

Summary

Aims to require a board of trustees for every charter school to report annually to the Pennsylvania Department of Education the number of students who leave the charter school, whether returning to their home district or transferring to another placement.

Intro Date

02/04/2025

Last Action

02/04/2025 H - Cosponsor memo filed

HCO1460 - School Savings Contracting

Sponsor

Rep. Valerie S. Gaydos (R)

Summary

Repeals section 528 of the omnibus School Code bill.

Intro Date

02/05/2025

Last Action

02/05/2025 H - Cosponsor memo filed

HCO1462 - Providing Holocaust Curriculum Transparency in our Public Schools. (Former HB 1986)

Sponsor

Rep. Kristin Marcell (R)

Summary

Requires any school entity offering this instruction to make the curriculum available on its website at least every three years and the Department of Education to post on its website the curriculum guidelines provided to school entities under this bill.

Intro Date

02/05/2025

Last Action

02/05/2025 H - Cosponsor memo filed

HCO1463 - Study and Report on Holocaust Curriculum and Instruction

Sponsor

Rep. Kristin Marcell (R)

Summary

Requires the State Board of Education to conduct a thorough study every five years, following the 2025-26 school year, on how school entities are offering Holocaust, genocide, and human rights instruction.

Intro Date

02/05/2025

Last Action

02/05/2025 H - Cosponsor memo filed

SCO251 - Changes to Teacher Certification Levels**Sponsor**

Sen. Kristin Phillips-Hill (R)

Summary

Expands on House Bill 1386 of 2017, which revised the levels at which teachers are certified, to create the following certification levels for new teachers: Early childhood: pre-kindergarten, kindergarten, grades 1 through 4 or ages 3 through 9. Elementary: kindergarten, grades 1 through 6 or ages 4 through 11. Middle: grades 6 through 9 or ages 11 through 15. Secondary: grades 7 through 12 or ages 11 through 21.

Intro Date

12/05/2024

Last Action

02/03/2025 S - Introduced SB220

SCO570 - Limiting Access to Smartphones and Social Media in Schools**Sponsor**

Sen. Doug Mastriano (R)

Summary

Incorporates the use of secure, lockable phone bags in which students would deposit their mobile devices during school.

Intro Date

01/09/2025

Last Action

02/03/2025 S - Introduced SB229

Basic Ed Bill Actions

HB190 - An Act amending the act of March 10, 1949 (P.L.30, No.14), known as the Public School Code of 1949, in school health services, providing for eating disorder awareness and education.

Sponsor

Rep. Jason Ortitay (R)

Summary

(PN 318) Amends the Public School Code, in school health services, providing for eating disorder awareness and education. Requires a school entity to annually provide information regarding eating disorder awareness and education for pupils in grades six through 12 to parents, guardians and key school personnel. Mandates the information shall be consistent with the educational information and materials and recommendations established under this section. Requires the educational information to be provided to parents, guardians and key school personnel annually via email, first class mail or on the school entity's publicly accessible website. Requires the Department of Health, in conjunction with the Department of Education, to develop educational information and materials and make recommendations for providing information. Provides for the development of recommendations and for input from the Eating Disorders Advisory Committee which is established under this section. Provides duties for the secretary to establish the Eating Disorders Advisory Committee and appoint members from other entities. Mandates the members of the committee to serve without compensation. Establishes meeting times and educational information and materials and recommendations developed to be provided to school entities within one year after the establishment of the committee. Provides for the development of additions and revisions of regulations. Provides several definitions. Effective in 60 days. (Prior PN: 137)

Intro Date

01/15/2025

Actions

01/29/2025 H - Re-committed to - House Appropriations

02/03/2025 H - Re-reported as committed - House Appropriations

02/03/2025 H - Laid out for discussion

02/03/2025 H - Third consideration and final passage

02/04/2025 S - Referred to - Senate Education

HB201 - An Act amending the act of March 10, 1949 (P.L.30, No.14), known as the Public School Code of 1949, in intermediate units, further providing for powers and duties of the intermediate unit board of directors and for capital subsidy.

Sponsor

Rep. Joe Ciresi (D)

Summary

(PN 255) Amends the Public School Code, in intermediate units, further providing for powers and duties of the intermediate unit board of directors to acquire land by purchase, lease or gift and for capital subsidy by stating all lease agreements, security agreements, loan agreements and mortgages or any other contacts to be approved by the Secretary of Education. Effective immediately.

Intro Date

01/23/2025

Actions

01/29/2025 H - Re-committed to - House Appropriations

02/03/2025 H - Re-reported as committed - House Appropriations

02/03/2025 H - Laid out for discussion

02/03/2025 H - Third consideration and final passage

02/04/2025 S - Referred to - Senate Education

HB240 - An Act amending Title 75 (Vehicles) of the Pennsylvania Consolidated Statutes, in licensing of drivers, further providing for qualifications for school bus driver endorsement.

Sponsor

Rep. Kerry A. Benninghoff (R)

Summary

(PN 192) Amends Title 75 (Vehicles), in licensing of drivers, further providing for qualifications for school bus driver endorsement to assert that applicants must complete a physical examination which will include a hearing test for those requiring hearing aids to ensure proper functioning to meet the department's minimum hearing standards. Effective in 60 days.

Intro Date

01/17/2025

Actions

01/27/2025 H - First consideration

02/04/2025 H - Removed from table

02/05/2025 H - Placed on HVS

02/05/2025 H - Second consideration

02/05/2025 H - Re-committed to - House Appropriations

HB325 - An Act amending the act of June 27, 2006 (1st Sp.Sess., P.L.1873, No.1), known as the Taxpayer Relief Act, in preliminary provisions, further providing for definitions; and, in taxation by school districts, further providing for school district tax notices.

Sponsor

Rep. Eddie Day Pashinski (D)

Summary

(PN 507) Amends the Taxpayer Relief Act, in preliminary provisions, further providing for definitions; and, in taxation by school districts, further providing for school district tax notices. Adds a definition for “conspicuous.” Replaces “property tax relief” with “State Gaming Fund tax reduction” under section 343 regarding school district tax notices. Adds the notice provisions for state gaming fund tax reductions. Specifies that casino gaming revenue is the source for the property tax reduction included on property tax bills. Effective immediately. (Prior PN 281)

Intro Date

01/24/2025

Actions

01/31/2025 H - Meeting Scheduled - 02/05/2025, 10:00 AM - Voting Meeting (House Finance), Room B31, Main Capitol

02/05/2025 H - Voted Favorably From Committee as Amended - House Finance

02/05/2025 H - Laid on the table

02/05/2025 H - First consideration

02/05/2025 H - Reported as amended - House Finance

HB447 - An Act amending the act of March 10, 1949 (P.L.30, No.14), known as the Public School Code of 1949, in pupils and attendance, further providing for immunization required and penalty.

Sponsor

Rep. Russ Diamond (R)

Summary

(PN 425) Amends the Public School Code, in pupils and attendance, further providing for immunization required and penalty. Directs public schools, nonpublic schools, political subdivisions or the commonwealth to provide information containing any existing or updated immunization requirements issued by the commonwealth. Directs entities to accept exemptions from immunization requirements, including the process by which a child may obtain exemptions. Provides definitions for “nonpublic school” and “public school entity.” Effective in 60 days.

Intro Date

01/31/2025

Actions

01/31/2025 H - Introduced

02/03/2025 H - Referred to - House Education

HB455 - An Act providing for grants to organizations that host or offer education, workforce training or skills development to young adults; establishing the Building a Better Future Grant Program; imposing duties on the Department of Labor and Industry; and making an appropriation.

Sponsor

Rep. Carol Hill-Evans (D)

Summary

(PN 437) The Building a Better Future Grant Program Act provides for grants to organizations that host or offer education, workforce training or skills development to young adults; establishes the Building a Better Future Grant Program within the Department of Labor and Industry (L&I) to provide grants to eligible organizations offering skill developments, educational services and any other relevant labor market opportunities to individuals aged 16 to 24 who have been disconnected from educational opportunities; imposes duties on L&I; and makes an appropriation of \$5 million from the General Fund to provide grants for this program as well as allowing L&I to appropriate any reserved moneys from the department as necessary. Provides definitions. Requires eligible organizations to enroll individuals aged 16 to 24 who can attest they come from low-income households and attest two additional specified disadvantages. Directs L&I to provide guidelines for the grants specifying requirements as well as supply program and fiscal reports to L&I. Asserts L&I may not award more than \$1 million to any single organization receiving the grant and that up to 5% of the money available for grants may be given to a statewide non-profit that supervises multiple eligible organizations. Effective immediately.

Intro Date

02/03/2025

Actions

02/03/2025 H - Introduced

02/03/2025 H - Referred to - House Labor and Industry

HB460 - An Act amending the act of March 10, 1949 (P.L.30, No.14), known as the Public School Code of 1949, in certification of teachers, further providing for child abuse recognition and reporting training; and, in terms and courses of study, providing for child abuse awareness and prevention.

Sponsor

Rep. Mary Jo Daley (D)

Summary

(PN 444) Amends the Public School Code, in certification of teachers, further providing for child abuse recognition and reporting training; and, in terms and courses of study, providing for child abuse awareness and prevention. Requires school entities to develop age-appropriate child abuse awareness and prevention educational materials and resources for students in kindergarten through 12th grade starting in the 2026-2027 school year. Asserts that these curriculums be modeled after a curriculum developed between the Department of Education (PDE) and the Department of Human Services (DHS) and then distributed to all public school entities and non-public school entities upon request. Directs the curriculum provided by PDE and DHS to be posted on publicly accessible websites. Provides definitions. Effective in 60 days.

Intro Date

02/03/2025

Actions

02/03/2025 H - Introduced

02/04/2025 H - Referred to - House Children and Youth

HB477 - An Act amending the act of June 3, 1937 (P.L.1333, No.320), known as the Pennsylvania Election Code, in nomination of candidates, providing for background checks for candidates for school district office.

Sponsor

Rep. Jeanne McNeill (D)

Summary

(PN 460) Amends the Pennsylvania Election Code, in nomination of candidates, providing for background checks for candidates for school district office. Requires candidates for any school district office to file criminal history reports and certification from the Department of Human Services (DHS) child abuse investigation database to the Department of State (DOS). Provides ineligibility for office. Specifies that a candidate for any school district office deemed ineligible for office shall not appear on a ballot for school district offices in any election. Directs DOS to promulgate rules and regulations as necessary. Effective immediately.

Intro Date

02/04/2025

Actions

02/04/2025 H - Introduced

02/04/2025 H - Referred to - House Education

HB480 - An Act amending the act of March 10, 1949 (P.L.30, No.14), known as the Public School Code of 1949, in charter schools, providing for full-time cyber education program offered by school district.

Sponsor

Rep. Ryan A. Bizzarro (D)

Summary

(PN 463) Amends the Public School Code, in charter schools, providing for full-time cyber education program offered by school district. Provides that if a student enrolls in the full-time cyber education program offered by the school district of residence, the enrollment is subject to no tuition or fees other than fees that the school district imposes generally. Adds that the parents or guardians of that student are responsible for paying the cyber charter school a per-student amount and the payments must be made to the cyber charter school in 12 equally monthly payments by the fifth of every month within the operating school year. Adds that a student enrolled in a cyber charter school under this clause shall not be included in the average daily membership of the student's school district of residence for the purpose of providing basic education funding payments and special education funding. Adds a definition for "full-time cyber education program." Effective in 60 days.

Intro Date

02/04/2025

Actions

02/04/2025 H - Introduced

02/04/2025 H - Referred to - House Education

HB495 - An Act amending the act of March 10, 1949 (P.L.30, No.14), known as the Public School Code of 1949, in charter schools, further providing for enrollment.

Sponsor

Rep. Carol Kazeem (D)

Summary

(PN 484) Amends the Public School Code, in charter schools, further providing for enrollment. Subjects the enrollment of students in a charter school or regional charter school to a cap on students who reside in the district or districts in which the charter school is physically located or in which the regional charter school is chartered as part of a written charter school under section 1720-A. Requires the cap to be approved by the local board of school directors of a school district or by the local boards of school directors of a school district in the case of a regional charter school. Provides that the enrollment cap shall not preclude a charter school from enrolling students from districts outside of the physical location of the charter school or in the case of a regional charter school, from districts outside of where the regional charter school is chartered. Effective in 60 days.

Intro Date

02/04/2025

Actions

02/04/2025 H - Introduced

02/05/2025 H - Referred to - House Education

SB9 - An Act providing for sport activities in public institutions of higher education and public school entities to be expressly designated male, female or coed; and creating causes of action for harm suffered by designation.

Sponsor

Sen. Judy Ward (R)

Summary

(PN 177) The Fairness in Women's Sports Act provides for sport activities in public institutions of higher education and public school entities to be expressly designated male, female or coed; and creates causes of action for harm suffered by designation. Provides definitions. Prohibits athletic teams or sports designated for females, women or girls from being open to students of the male sex. Allows students to participate in an interscholastic, intercollegiate, intramural or club athletic team or sport designed for the student's sex or designated coed or mixed. Prohibits a government entity, licensing or accrediting organization or an athletic association or organization from entertaining a complaint, opening an investigation or taking any other adverse action against a school or institution of higher education for maintaining separate interscholastic, intercollegiate, intramural or club athletic teams or sports for students of the female sex. Permits a student who is deprived of an athletic opportunity or suffers direct or indirect harm as a result of a known violation to bring a cause of action for injunctive relief, damages, psychological, emotional and physical harm suffered, attorney fees and costs and any other relief available under law against the school or institution of higher education. Allows a student who is subject to retaliation or other adverse action by a school, institution of higher education or athletic association or organization as a result of reporting a violation to an employee or representative of the school, institution or athletic association or organization or to any federal or state agency with oversight of schools or institutions of higher education in Pennsylvania to bring a cause of action. Permits a school or institution of higher education that suffers direct or indirect harm as a result of a violation to bring cause of action. Prohibits a person from bringing a civil action later than two years after the day on which the harm underlying the cause of action occurs. Provides that if a part of this act is found invalid, all valid parts that are severable from the invalid part shall remain in effect. Effective in 60 days.

Intro Date

02/03/2025

Actions

02/03/2025 S - Introduced

02/03/2025 S - Referred to - Senate Education

SB220 - An Act amending the act of March 10, 1949 (P.L.30, No.14), known as the Public School Code of 1949, in certification of teachers, providing for instructional certificate grade spans and age levels; and making an editorial change.

Sponsor

Sen. Kristin Phillips-Hill (R)

Summary

(PN 169) Amends the Public School Code, in certification of teachers, adding a section to provide for instructional certificate grade spans and age levels; and making an editorial change to revise the heading of section 1202.1 to be Special Education Certificate Grade Spans and Age Levels and Duties of Department. Establishes certification levels for new teachers, specifying that certificates issued shall remain valid for the term of the certificate. Provides for an individual holding Elementary/Middle Certificates. Effective immediately.

Intro Date

02/03/2025

Actions

02/03/2025 S - Introduced

02/03/2025 S - Referred to - Senate Education

SB227 - An Act amending the act of March 10, 1949 (P.L.30, No.14), known as the Public School Code of 1949, in duties and powers of boards of school directors, further providing for State convention or association, delegates, expenses and membership.

Sponsor

Sen. Kristin Phillips-Hill (R)

Summary

(PN 173) Amends the Public School Code, in duties and powers of boards of school directors, further providing for state convention or association, delegates, expenses and membership to add that the Pennsylvania School Boards Association shall be considered a state-affiliated entity under the Right-to-Know Law. Effective in 60 days.

Intro Date

02/03/2025

Actions

02/03/2025 S - Introduced

02/03/2025 S - Referred to - Senate Education

SB229 - An Act amending the act of March 10, 1949 (P.L.30, No.14), known as the Public School Code of 1949, in school safety and security, establishing the Cell Phone Lockable Bag Pilot Program.

Sponsor

Sen. Doug Mastriano (R)

Summary

(PN 175) Amends the Public School Code, in school safety and security, adding a section to establish the Cell Phone Lockable Bag Pilot Program to provide funding to cover the costs of purchasing secure cell phone lockable bags. Specifies that the number of applicants chosen shall be contingent upon the amount of funding allocated. Outlines the duties of a school entity participating in the program. Requires a report to the governor and the General Assembly, prohibiting the report from containing any identifiable information regarding a student and providing for confidentiality. Permits aggregate data to be released at the committee's discretion. Expires the added section on Dec. 1, 2026. Defines "cell phone lockable bag," "program" and "school entity." Effective in 60 days.

Intro Date

02/03/2025

Actions

02/03/2025 S - Introduced

02/03/2025 S - Referred to - Senate Education

SB230 - An Act amending the act of March 10, 1949 (P.L.30, No.14), known as the Public School Code of 1949, in terms and courses of study, providing for parental control relating to instructional materials and books containing sexually explicit content.

Sponsor

Sen. Doug Mastriano (R)

Intro Date

02/03/2025

Actions

02/03/2025 S - Introduced

02/03/2025 S - Referred to - Senate Education

Higher Ed Bill Actions

SB9 - An Act providing for sport activities in public institutions of higher education and public school entities to be expressly designated male, female or coed; and creating causes of action for harm suffered by designation.

Sponsor

Sen. Judy Ward (R)

Summary

(PN 177) The Fairness in Women's Sports Act provides for sport activities in public institutions of higher education and public school entities to be expressly designated male, female or coed; and creates causes of action for harm suffered by designation. Provides definitions. Prohibits athletic teams or sports designated for females, women or girls from being open to students of the male sex. Allows students to participate in an interscholastic, intercollegiate, intramural or club athletic team or sport designed for the student's sex or designated coed or mixed. Prohibits a government entity, licensing or accrediting organization or an athletic association or organization from entertaining a complaint, opening an investigation or taking any other adverse action against a school or institution of higher education for maintaining separate interscholastic, intercollegiate, intramural or club athletic teams or sports for students of the female sex. Permits a student who is deprived of an athletic opportunity or suffers direct or indirect harm as a result of a known violation to bring a cause of action for injunctive relief, damages, psychological, emotional and physical harm suffered, attorney fees and costs and any other relief available under law against the school or institution of higher education. Allows a student who is subject to retaliation or other adverse action by a school, institution of higher education or athletic association or organization as a result of reporting a violation to an employee or representative of the school, institution or athletic association or organization or to any federal or state agency with oversight of schools or institutions of higher education in Pennsylvania to bring a cause of action. Permits a school or institution of higher education that suffers direct or indirect harm as a result of a violation to bring cause of action. Prohibits a person from bringing a civil action later than two years after the day on which the harm underlying the cause of action occurs. Provides that if a part of this act is found invalid, all valid parts that are severable from the invalid part shall remain in effect. Effective in 60 days.

Intro Date

02/03/2025

Actions

02/03/2025 S - Introduced

02/03/2025 S - Referred to - Senate Education

Upcoming Events

TUESDAY – 02/18/2025

1:00 PM, [Senate Appropriations](#)

Budget Hearing, Hearing Room 1, North Office Building

Budget Hearing with the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education (PASSHE) and the Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency (PHEAA)

THURSDAY – 02/20/2025

9:00 AM, Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency

Board of Directors meeting, PHEAA Board Room

10:00 AM, House Appropriations

Budget Hearing, House Floor

Budget Hearing with the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education (PASSHE) and the Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency (PHEAA)

1:00 PM, House Appropriations

Budget Hearing, House Floor

Budget hearing with state-related universities

MONDAY – 02/24/2025

10:00 AM, House Appropriations

Budget Hearing, House Floor

Budget hearing with the Department of Education (PDE)

1:00 PM, House Appropriations

Budget Hearing, House Floor

Budget Hearing with the Department of Education (PDE)

THURSDAY – 03/06/2025

1:00 PM, House Appropriations

Budget Hearing, House Floor

Budget hearing with the Governor's Office of the Budget/Executive Offices

WEDNESDAY – 02/26/2025

9:30 AM, [Senate Appropriations](#)

Budget Hearing, Hearing Room 1, North Office Building

Budget hearing with the Department of Education (PDE)

1:00 PM, [Senate Appropriations](#)

Budget Hearing, Hearing Room 1, North Office Building

Budget hearing with the Department of Education (PDE) continued

THURSDAY – 03/06/2025

9:30 AM, [Senate Appropriations](#)

Budget Hearing, Hearing Room 1, North Office Building

Budget hearing with the Governor's Budget Office/Executive Offices

1:00 PM, [House Appropriations](#)

Budget Hearing, House Floor

Budget hearing with the Governor's Office of the Budget/Executive Offices

In the News

[01/31/2025 - Strengthening Our Communities: Shapiro Administration Invests More than \\$1 Million; Celebrates Ribbon Cutting at Greater Hazleton YMCA Early Education Center](#)

[02/03/2025 - House Dems: Ciresi, Marcell bipartisan bill to allow intermediate units to own facilities for instructional use passes House](#)

[02/03/2025 - Office of Administration: Shapiro Administration Announces \\$1,000 Scholarships for Commonwealth Employees at Central Penn College](#)

[02/03/2025 - Governor's Advisory Commissions Join Adagio Health, University of Pittsburgh to Spotlight Women's Health Issues](#)

[02/04/2025 - Gebhard Sounds Alarm Over Shapiro's Budget Proposal](#)

[2/04/2025 - What Pennsylvanians Are Saying About Governor Shapiro's 2025-26 Proposed Budget to Solve Problems for Pennsylvanians by Cutting Costs, Creating Opportunity, Investing in Public Safety, and Getting Stuff Done](#)

[02/04/2025 - Mastriano Reveals the Fantasy and Reality of Shapiro's Budget Proposal](#)

[02/04/2025 - Phillips-Hill: Shapiro's Out-of-Control Budget Spending Puts Taxpayers at Risk](#)

[02/04/2025 - Coleman Committed to Blocking Shapiro's Plan to Overspend](#)

[02/04/2025 - Stefano Reacts to Shapiro's Budget Address: It's Like Groundhog Day](#)

[02/04/2025 - Boscola Applauds Shapiro's Budget Address, Emphasizes Key Investments in Education, Energy, and Economic Development](#)

[02/04/2025 - PA House Democratic Leaders Applaud Governor's Budget Proposal](#)

[02/04/2025 - Ciresi highlights continued progress on cyber charter reform, addressing education underfunding in Governor Shapiro's budget proposal](#)

[02/04/2025 - Fleming responds to Shapiro's 2025 budget address](#)

[02/04/2025 - Bernstine: Shapiro's Irresponsible Budget Will Lead to Tax Hikes](#)

[02/04/2025 - Nelson: Budget Proposal Would Lead to Tax Increase](#)

[02/04/2025 - Scheuren Responds to Governor's Budget Address](#)

[02/04/2025 - Pickett: Shapiro Budget Proposal Unsustainable, Unworkable](#)

[02/04/2025 - Weaknecht Responds to Governor's Budget Address](#)

[02/04/2025 - Smith: Governor's Proposal Another Unsustainable Spending Plan](#)

[02/04/2025 - Kozak: Governor's Budget Would Make Us Live Beyond Our Means](#)

[02/04/2025 - Cutler Responds to Shapiro Budget Proposal](#)

[02/04/2025 - Senate Democratic Leader Jay Cost, Appropriations Chair Vincent Hughes Applaud Governor Shapiro's 2025-26 Budget](#)

[02/04/2025 - Senate Republicans: Shapiro's Spending Plan Unrealistic](#)

[02/04/2025 - Senator Collett Reacts to Governor Shapiro's 2024-25 Budget Address](#)

[02/04/2025 - Senator Pisciotano Issues Statement Following Governor Shapiro's Budget Address](#)

[02/04/2025 - SEIU PA State Council Leaders Respond to Governor Shapiro's Budget Address](#)

[02/04/2025 - Governor's Spending Plan Not Aligned with PA's Needs, Barger Says](#)

[02/04/2025 - Key Investments Featured in Budget Proposal, Mehaffie Says](#)

[02/04/2025 - Pennsylvania House Republicans Respond to Governor's FY 2025-26 Budget Address](#)

[02/04/2025 - Gaydos Responds to Gov. Shapiro's \\$51.47 Billion Budget Proposal](#)

[02/04/2025 - Schmitt: More Sin Taxes Not the Path Forward](#)

[02/04/2025 - Anderson Issues Statement on Governor's State Budget Address](#)

[02/04/2025 - Budget Plan Lacks Sustainability, Cooper Says](#)

[02/04/2025 - Day Responds to Governor's Budget Proposal](#)

[02/04/2025 - D'Orsie Unimpressed by Shapiro's Proposed 2025-26 Budget](#)

[02/04/2025 - Pugh Reacts to Shapiro's Proposed 2025-26 Budget](#)

[02/04/2025 - Olsommer: Shapiro's Spending is Not Sustainable](#)

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