

May 16 – 22, 2025

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SESSION STATUS

At 3:52 p.m. on Wednesday, May 14, 2025, the House stands adjourned until Monday, June 2, 2025, at 12:00 p.m., unless sooner recalled by the Speaker.

At 2:19 p.m. on Tuesday, May 13, 2025, the Senate recessed until Monday, June 2, 2025, at 2:00 p.m. unless sooner recalled by the President Pro Tempore.

UPCOMING SESSION DAYS

House

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

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.pslgovtrac.com) users. For more information, contact sales@mypls.com.

Press Conferences

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

PA PRESS CLUB HOSTS HOUSE REPUBLICAN LEADER JESSE TOPPER

By Julia Walters, Pennsylvania Legislative Services | May 19, 2025

The PA Press Club hosted House Republican Leader Jesse Topper (R-Bedford), where he spoke about the governor's 2025-2026 budget proposal, tax structure reforms, educational initiatives and hosted a Q&A.

Francine Schertzer, senior vice president, PA Press Club, introduced Rep. Topper. She described his dedication to proper and accessible health care in rural communities and improving education initiatives, noting his current tenure as the Republican Chair for the House Education Committee. She also mentioned Rep. Topper's involvement in his community, especially with the Bedford Chamber of Commerce and the Bedford City Council, of which Rep. Topper held official positions.

Rep. Topper stated how he was becoming familiar with giving more speeches since being elected a caucus leader. He mentioned how much he "appreciates" speaking with community members on the future of Pennsylvania as well as the Republican caucus. "That's why our time in the district is so vital—to find out what is really important to the people whose lives we represent when we're down here in Harrisburg," he said. Rep. Topper noted how this upcoming June will be his 11th budget season in Harrisburg. "June is the month where I, as a Pirates fan, realize we're not making the playoffs," he continued. Rep. Topper criticized the governor's 2025-2026 budget proposal, stating it's "not sustainable." He explained that even if Pennsylvania didn't increase its budget "one penny," the state would still be "operating in a deficit." He questioned the role of state government, pondering the difference between making numbers work on paper versus "dynamically work to change what the numbers are in the first place." Rep. Topper noted the significance of discussing public policy to drive economic growth. "If we don't change our trajectory economically in Pennsylvania, the numbers on the page won't matter," he stated. He focused on energy development, mentioning the commonwealth has abundant energy resources to make it an economic "centerpiece." Rep. Topper additionally expressed his desire to move out of the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) and to streamline Pennsylvania's permitting processes in order to promptly advance energy development projects. He emphasized energy development in Pennsylvania is important not only to create jobs and stimulate the economy, but also to generate more energy for residents. "If our constituents start flipping light switches and nothing comes on, they will find somebody else to try and change that dynamic," he warned.

Rep. Topper also expressed concern about Pennsylvania's tax structure. While he commended the reduction of the state's corporate net income tax (CNIT), he mentioned other issues, including the elimination of accelerated sales tax, "something that was a cash grab under the Rendell administration." He mentioned goals of trying to "incentivize companies and individuals to invest in Pennsylvania," but stated that "real specific" tax credit programs leave out "swaths" of businesses or individuals. Rep. Topper accused the legislature of sticking a "band-aid" on issues instead of finding proper solutions "to make Pennsylvania open for every kind of business." Rep. Topper circled back to his question regarding the role of state government, adding there aren't "winners and losers" but that they are there to "provide opportunity." He continued, stating that "Government should not be in the business of guaranteeing success" but added that they should be there to ensure everyone in the commonwealth "should have the opportunity to succeed." Rep.

Topper noted some “bipartisan” accomplishments in the education space, but said a real challenge is ensuring students stay to live and work in Pennsylvania. He mentioned the Grow PA program to incentivize students to find work within the state. “We do not have that constitutional obligation in higher ed, which means we should see a return on investment in those tax dollars,” he stated. Rep. Topper praised the Performance-Based Funding Council that was implemented during last year’s budget. He added it was “changing the way we think about higher education, how we fund it and what we expect.”

Rep. Topper stated K-12 education needs “fundamental transformation” as well, describing his family’s background in teaching. He emphasized that alternative learning environments for children are beneficial, highlighting his own experience with school and stating, “The traditional brick and mortar public school setting didn’t work for me.” He stressed that the legislature should “be more dynamic in how we think of education,” mentioning looking at schools that are successful, “both public and private, both charter and traditional brick and mortar.” Rep. Topper noted the necessity of reforming education, emphasizing that education should be more individualized to meet specific students’ needs. He added that while these conversations around education can be “difficult,” it’s imperative to ensure every child in Pennsylvania has the opportunity to succeed, “no matter where they’re from, no matter what their financial situation is.” Rep. Topper emphasized the “urgency” of educational reforms, stating that if the legislature does not act soon, “we will be in a situation where we will continue to lose population, and we will continue to lose opportunities for our young people.” Rep. Topper explained that “managing less and less” will become increasingly challenging, “while people expect more and more.”

Was the [adult-use marijuana bill](#) intentionally bad to end debate on the issue?

Rep. Topper responded, “I’m not going to speak to anyone’s motivation.” He added that the General Assembly votes on “actual legislation” rather than “concepts and ideas.” Rep. Topper noted there were “many flaws” with the adult-use marijuana bill but mentioned conversations will continue around the subject in the future.

What are you going to do to control charter school costs, and will we see cyber charter school reform going to the governor’s desk in 2025?

Rep. Topper stated there was cyber charter school reform in the last budget cycle, mentioning changes to special education. He explained charter schools were created “as an answer to public school districts that did not want to see voucher programs.” Rep. Topper added that charter schools grew more than anyone could have known. “Did the formula need redone? Did we? Did we start that work last year? Yes, absolutely,” he said. Rep. Topper urged people to question why families choose charter schools over traditional public education. He mentioned waiting to see how last year’s reforms “have a chance to work for a year,” but added that conversations regarding funding and reforms around charter schools are still occurring.

Given the structural deficit facing Pennsylvania, would the state government benefit from a United States Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE)-style review of state government like the one taking place in Washington, D.C.?

Rep. Topper mentioned the significance of not keeping around “legacy programs, legacy regulations, legacy line items just for the sake of keeping them.” He stated that ensuring these programs are still effective is a “healthy operation to do, not just this year, but every year.”

Have you met with Gov. Josh Shapiro one-on-one since becoming minority leader?

Rep. Topper responded that he has met with the governor. “I think we have a relationship that is fairly open when it comes to sharing our thoughts and our dreams, even when they differ about how we see public policy,” he said. Rep. Topper also commended Gov. Shapiro for “hitting it off” with his mother, who Rep. Topper described as having “a Donald Trump dog collar for the dog” and being “very opinionated.” Rep. Topper added that Gov. Shapiro was “very gracious” in hosting his family on swearing-in day, stating he “greatly appreciated” it.

Do you have any concerns that public discontent over the Trump administration will negatively affect your caucus in next year’s election?

Rep. Topper responded, stating it is a “trap” to rely too heavily on the federal government. He stated he is focused on growing Pennsylvania and mentioned being “conservative” regarding “what we always think is going to come from the federal government.”

What do you need from your caucus to approve voter ID?

Rep. Topper mentioned that any legislation will face “scrutiny” regarding the bill’s language. He added they will “continue to work on getting that done in some shape or form.”

What are your thoughts on closing the U.S. Department of Education (ED), and also possible cuts to Medicaid?

Regarding Medicaid cuts, Rep. Topper stated, “There have been none yet.” He mentioned waiting to “see what happens” before commenting on that issue further. Rep. Topper also stated ED affects Pennsylvania schools “very little.” He continued, “When it does, it has the strings attached of the standardized testing that we have been taught.” He added that different grants that fall under ED could be implemented in other ways “without a complete bureaucracy surrounding it.” Rep. Topper added, “Schools are run by a mixture of state government and local government. As long as that stays intact, I really don’t think it would have that big of an effect.”

When can I buy a car on Sunday?

Rep. Topper humorously responded, “When we say, you can, I guess.” He continued, “I’ve heard of a lot of priorities over the next month, but we’ll add that one to the list.”

Schertzer thanked Rep. Topper for his presence at the PA Press Club and stated their next luncheon is June 23 with guest Luke Bernstein, president of the Pennsylvania Chamber of Business and Industry.



GOV. SHAPIRO HIGHLIGHTS HISTORIC EDUCATION FUNDING

By Zoe Buchmann, Pennsylvania Legislative Services | May 21, 2025

Gov. Josh Shapiro was joined by legislators and local officials in highlighting the results of historic public K-12 education funding at today’s press conference in the Scranton School District.

Ty Holmes, president, Scranton School Board, welcomed Gov. Shapiro and local and state officials, expressing gratitude for their presence and continued support of public education. He emphasized the significant improvements made by the Scranton School District in recent years, crediting increased state funding as a critical factor in these developments. He outlined how enhanced state investment in education has created a ripple effect across the district. He explained that this funding has enabled the introduction of new student programs, the hiring of essential personnel and the restoration of pre-kindergarten offerings in partnership with community organizations. He added that it has also allowed the district to avoid raising property taxes for two consecutive years, providing economic relief to local residents. He underscored the dual achievement of fiscal responsibility and educational advancement, noting that greater financial resources have empowered administrators and teachers to better serve students both academically and developmentally. He reaffirmed the board’s commitment to building on this progress and collaborating with community stakeholders to ensure that students in Scranton have access to the same opportunities as those in other districts.

Gov. Shapiro highlighted the investments Pennsylvania has made in public education. He expressed his appreciation for local leadership. He particularly praised Holmes, crediting him and his fellow board members for their contributions. He emphasized that their work, along with the funding, has transformed the school district. Gov. Shapiro recalled visiting a first-grade classroom, where students participated in a mock legislative session, illustrating the importance of persistence and collaboration, values he connected to Pennsylvania’s broader educational turnaround.

Gov. Shapiro discussed how a decade ago, the state cut roughly \$1 billion from public education, leading to larger class sizes, fewer programs and reduced support services. He explained that under former governor Tom Wolf, efforts began to reverse those cuts, but schools remained underfunded. He asserted that “we knew that we were not meeting our constitutional obligation,” referencing Article III of the state constitution, which guarantees a “thorough and efficient education system.” He noted that shortly after he took office, a state court officially ruled the existing education system unconstitutional. In response, he and lawmakers from both parties agreed to come together to fix it. He stressed that this bipartisan cooperation was crucial, explaining, “Instead of pointing fingers, we all agreed... to work to address this crisis.” He detailed the historic investments that included universal free breakfast in schools, expanded after-school and early childhood programs, increased special education funding, infrastructure improvements and stipends for student teachers. “Instead of having to take out a loan just to get your student teaching done, we are now providing student teachers with a \$10,000 stipend,” he added, underscoring a commitment to grow and retain quality educators.

Gov. Shapiro also highlighted that state funding for the Scranton district had increased by 40% over two years, amounting to a \$28.4 million boost. “From \$73 million in 2022 to over \$100 million today,” he emphasized, pointing to Rep. Bridget Kosierowski’s (D-Lackawanna) efforts in delivering that change. He celebrated that the funding resulted in restored preschool programs, upgraded school buildings, more school counselors and the return of music and art to middle school. He praised Scranton’s work to improve attendance, increase test scores and support students’ mental health with a new \$200 million fund for school-based professionals.

Gov. Shapiro also addressed investments in vocational and technical education. “There should be no wrong path to opportunity and success,” he remarked, referencing increased funding in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) and Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs. He noted that Consumer Affairs had recently ranked Pennsylvania among the top five states for public education, which he attributed to targeted, bipartisan investments. He acknowledged the political challenges facing education funding at the federal level, referencing his legal battle against a Washington decision to block \$200 million in aid and

promised continued action to protect public schools. Gov. Shapiro stated that “a budget is a statement of your priorities and your principles,” and that for him and his administration, those principles center on educational equity, opportunity and investment. He reiterated his commitment to ensuring every Pennsylvania student has the “freedom to chart their own course” through access to quality public education. He affirmed that the state would keep progressing and that Scranton would remain a leading example of what is possible when communities and leaders work together.

Dr. Erin Keating, superintendent, Scranton School District, thanked Gov. Shapiro for his introduction and acknowledged the presence of state and local officials, welcoming them to witness the progress being made in Scranton’s schools. She emphasized the district’s history, growing diversity and economic challenges, highlighting that nearly 80% of its approximately 9,300 students are economically disadvantaged and that over 60 languages are spoken across the district. She explained that Scranton is committed to providing a high-quality, future-focused education for all students and emphasized the importance of every dollar in making that possible. She continued that with new funding and support, the district had been able to relaunch preschool programs, expand STEM education and increase access to dual enrollment and CTE. She noted that real-world, hands-on learning was a top priority in ensuring that no student is left behind. She also highlighted major investments in student wellness, including the hiring of school counselors and social workers to address the ongoing mental health crisis. She detailed the return of essential middle school programming like music, art, physical education and technology, stressing that these subjects were not extras but integral to a well-rounded education. She also outlined major safety and infrastructure upgrades, including fire alarms, secure doors, interior cameras and a large-scale renovation of West Scranton Intermediate School. She shared a student’s positive reaction to these changes, noting that formerly open classroom spaces were being transformed into structured, engaging learning environments. She praised Gov. Shapiro’s leadership and the administration’s commitment to equitable public education. She emphasized that Scranton, historically underfunded, is finally beginning to see real change through strategic investment. She reaffirmed her belief in the city’s future and her confidence in the staff and students, thanking Gov. Shapiro for his continued support.

Rep. Kosierowski made an observation about the scoreboard displaying the number 48, noting the coincidence that Gov. Shapiro, Pennsylvania’s 48th governor, was visiting that day. She reflected on the importance of preventative care and how wellness begins long before someone enters a clinic or a classroom. She emphasized the critical connection between student well-being and educational success, stressing that children need safe learning environments, full stomachs and access to mental health support in order to thrive. As a nurse and legislator, she explained that she is especially passionate about the role schools play in supporting children’s overall health. She praised the Shapiro administration’s efforts in strengthening public education, highlighting historic investments including over \$11 billion annually in K-12 education and a \$2 billion increase during his term. She also pointed to several initiatives that directly benefit students across Pennsylvania, such as free breakfast programs for over 1.7 million students, expanded CTE and increased teacher certification. She stated that while all of these accomplishments matter, what resonates most with her is the administration’s focus on student mental health. She underscored the impact of the \$200 million directed toward mental health services in schools, noting that this funding translates into more counselors, more support and more opportunities for healing. She thanked Gov. Shapiro for showing up, listening and delivering on his promises, calling for continued efforts to build a future in Scranton where every child has access to care, resources and opportunity.

Gov. Shapiro highlighted and thanked the people who have worked on passing legislation, including Sen. Marty Flynn (D-Luzerne), Rep. Kyle Mullins (D-Lackawanna) and Rep. Jim Haddock (D-Luzerne) to increase funding, stressing the importance of good, quality leadership like in Scranton. He opened the press conference to questions.

What are your plans for districts that do not qualify for the extra advocacy funding and are about to cut programs, possibly cut staff, and are worried that they could end up in the same situation Scranton was in about a decade ago?

Gov. Shapiro addressed concerns about perceived funding cuts by specifying that, under his administration, funding for public schools has not only been maintained but has significantly increased. He explained that school funding is distributed through the Basic Education Funding (BEF) formula, which has seen notable increases during each of his two years in office. He stressed that this upward trend would continue under his proposed budget, emphasizing his commitment to ensuring that schools across the state have the resources they need. He acknowledged a long-standing inequity in Pennsylvania’s education system, citing a court ruling that found the state’s method of funding schools to be unconstitutional. He stated that economically disadvantaged districts, many of which had been historically and chronically underfunded, are now being prioritized to correct decades of imbalance. He made it clear that these schools are not poor in terms of educational quality or potential, but rather in financial resources, which have hindered their ability to serve students equitably. Under his proposed plan, he asserted that every school district across the state would receive increased funding. He added that those who had suffered from consistent underfunding would receive even more substantial support in an effort to make them whole. He stated that this funding strategy is not only fair but necessary to move away from a broken and unequal system toward one that truly supports all students.

How do you feel about the progress that you have made here in the Scranton School District with the state’s investment, and how do you look to build on that?

Gov. Shapiro expressed his intention to visit Isaac Tripp Elementary School as a way to highlight the notable progress made not only at that school but across the entire Scranton School District. He emphasized that Scranton serves as a powerful example of

how increased and equitable funding can transform a historically underfunded district. He added that the improvements seen in Scranton demonstrate the tangible impact of recent education investments. He explained that this transformation is exactly what state leaders had envisioned when they reached a bipartisan agreement to increase funding and fulfill Pennsylvania's constitutional obligation to provide an adequate education for all children.

What is your reaction to the recent diagnosis of former president Joe Biden?

Gov. Shapiro spoke on behalf of himself and First Lady Lori Shapiro, extending his wishes for Biden's full and speedy recovery, honoring his resilience in the face of ongoing medical challenges.

How do you feel moving forward with the new parameter you are going to be taking regarding more funding for education?

Gov. Shapiro answered that he feels very confident that the legislature will be able to come together again to continue to meet the obligation to the districts. He added that last year, during the budget process, they agreed to continue to fund education for the coming years in order to get over the current issues. He stated that he expects Democrats and Republicans to come together over the course of the next month to work on the state budget and continue to invest in the school districts of the state.

Is it true that when you spoke to Biden about your concerns with his health, the former first lady Jill Biden shut down the conversation?

Gov. Shapiro responded that he had never discussed health concerns with the former president, contrary to claims. Instead, he stated that his prior conversations with the former president focused on political strategy and concerns regarding the president's electability in Pennsylvania, something he emphasized he had addressed directly and honestly with the president and his team.

Gov. Shapiro reflected on his trip today to the school, sharing how meaningful it was to spend time with young students. He explained that his role as governor is ultimately to ensure every Pennsylvanian has a fair chance at success, and that such opportunity begins with investment in public education. He continued that seeing the direct results of these investments, the progress students are making, the joy in their classrooms and the support they're receiving, affirmed for him the value of the discussions in Harrisburg.



Committee News

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

House Republican Policy Committee

05/19/2025, 1:00 p.m., Community College of Philadelphia, 12901 Townsend Road, Philadelphia
Pennsylvania Legislative Services

The committee held a public hearing to examine the School District of Philadelphia.

Chairman David Rowe (R-Snyder) highlighted the importance of education in achieving the American Dream. He discussed the role of Luzerne County Community College as an example in helping individuals find success and economic mobility.

Rep. Martina White (R-Philadelphia) criticized the School District of Philadelphia for not approving new charter schools and highlighted issues such as overcrowded schools and the ineffective lottery system for school placements. She pointed out the state's increased spending on education without significant improvements in student outcomes, especially in literacy, and advocated for school choice. Rep. White also mentioned a projected budget shortfall and promised to address reports of waste, fraud and mismanagement within the Philadelphia School District.

Chairman Rowe described the struggles within Philadelphia's K-12 public education system, emphasizing the lack of accountability and the erosion of children's futures. He stressed that all Pennsylvania students deserve access to high-quality education in safe environments.

Christian Barnard, senior policy analyst, Reason Foundation, emphasized the importance of examining financial practices in school districts, focusing on the Philadelphia School District's use of resources since the pandemic. He highlighted the district's high funding, loss in student population, increase in non-instructional staff, high debt ratio and reliance on COVID-19 relief aid. Barnard suggested school consolidation, controlling staffing growth, reassessing facilities improvement plans and maintaining a strong general fund reserve balance to improve financial standing.

Shannon Mitchell, parent, School District of Philadelphia, shared her struggles with the Philadelphia School District regarding her two special needs children, detailing battles for appropriate educational support and criticizing the district's handling of her daughter's education. She called for change to better support non-verbal, autistic children and their families.

Rep. Barbara Gleim (R-Cumberland) shared her observations on Philadelphia schools prioritizing administrative office upgrades over classrooms and asked Barnard if his data included information on lead abatement and school safety and security funding for the Philadelphia School District in the last budget. Barnard said his analysis focused on expenditure data, which includes spending on property services, construction or facilities improvement, as long as the funds were actually spent. Rep. Gleim inquired about the allocation of funds within the school district, noting the discrepancy between the small increase in student attendance and the significant hiring of professional and support staff. Barnard explained that support staff includes a variety of positions and mentioned the limitations of state data in tracking specific schools these staff members are assigned to but offered to provide a more detailed breakdown later. Rep. Gleim asked about the discrepancy between the Philadelphia School District's claim of being "underfunded" and the data showing it as one of the highest-funded districts. Barnard addressed this by pointing out that claims of underfunding often stem from court rulings and highlighted a 2023 court decision that found schools underfunded. He expressed skepticism about the underfunding claims, especially in light of a recent \$1.1 billion federal funding to the district, and doubted that an additional billion dollars would substantially benefit the students.

Rep. White inquired about Barnard's experience reviewing publicly available financial information from various school districts and the level of detail provided in these financial reports. Barnard criticized the overall quality of school finance data for its lack of transparency but noted Arizona for its better quality expenditure data. He emphasized the need for transparency in how districts allocate staff and mentioned new federal requirements for states to report school-level spending data as a positive step towards improving transparency. Rep. White asked about how lower-spending states like Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama achieve better outcomes for kids and how school choice impacts their budgets. Barnard discussed the benefits of investing in early curriculum and teacher retraining over adding support staff and highlighted the role of school choice in providing accountability and competition, leading to improvements in public school performance. Rep. White further asked about the vacancies of buildings, mentioning a figure of about 50%, and inquired about the number of students affected and how the school district is managing the closures and facilities process. Barnard responded that the Philadelphia School District has a capacity for 180,000 students but currently has 118,000 students enrolled, with nearly half of the district's schools experiencing a loss of 20% or more of their students since the pandemic. He emphasized the need for the district to review under-enrolled buildings and consider factors such as performance and building conditions, mentioning that significant financial savings for the district could come from managing labor costs, not just focusing on the buildings.

Rep. Kristin Marcell (R-Bucks) shared her personal experience with her son's Individualized Education Program (IEP) and the challenges of remote learning, asking Mitchell for advice on how to better educate parents about their rights and the processes involved in securing necessary services for their children. Mitchell emphasized the importance of parent-to-parent communication in navigating special needs education and the necessity of advocating for one's child, sharing her approach to preparing her daughter for life's challenges. Mitchell also noted the lack of understanding from those not living in similar circumstances. Rep. Marcell followed up by asking about the feasibility of installing video cameras in special education rooms in elementary schools to review any incidents that occur. Mitchell strongly agreed with the idea, citing incidents of misunderstanding and mistreatment of autistic individuals, and suggested that schools should provide a contact person for parents to navigate the education system.

Chairman Rowe inquired about the long-term impact of Mitchell's intervention in her daughter's life, questioning how her actions would affect her daughter's ability to live a fulfilling life after graduation. Mitchell described the significant progress her daughter made with the help of Americans with Disabilities (ADA) services and contrasted this with the lack of progress and support her son faces in the public school system.

Chairman Rowe discussed the importance of "educational freedom" initiatives and questioned Barnard about the significant increase in administrative staff compared to teaching staff. Barnard stated that the growth in administrative staff is due to increased federal and state involvement in education, but expressed surprise at the level of staffing growth, especially given the lack of stringent requirements attached to COVID-19 relief funds. Chairman Rowe asked for examples of schools making adjustments. Barnard explained that school districts are more likely to make staffing adjustments when they face a reduction in state aid and cannot compensate with their property tax base or additional state funds. He emphasized the difficulty in reducing staff and the need for accountability in the process of right-sizing to scale. Chairman Rowe questioned the potential for mandating how state funds allocated to public education systems are spent, specifically suggesting a requirement for a certain percentage to be dedicated to teacher salaries. Chairman Rowe expressed his general opposition to state mandates but pondered their justification given the significant state investment in education. Barnard also expressed his stance against state mandates, emphasizing the importance of maintaining local control. He highlighted a concerning trend where only seven cents of every new dollar allocated to education went towards instructional salaries from 2002 to 2020. Barnard referenced Governor of Arkansas Sarah Huckabee Sanders'

approach in her state, which earmarked funding for significant teacher raises, as an example of a direct mandate to ensure funds reach teacher salaries. Barnard added he is not advocating for them but acknowledged their potential necessity.

Rep. Gleim discussed general accounting practices for school districts, noting that guidelines suggest districts should not have more than 8% in their general fund, yet many hold closer to 12%. She asked about Philadelphia's fund designation. Barnard explained that under state rules, 8% of funds can be uncommitted, with any excess needing dedication. He noted that Philadelphia now must set aside money as per state reporting, though the specific purpose of these funds was unclear. He mentioned that while some dedicated funds must be spent on their designated purpose if agreed to by the school board, in other cases, funds can be designated for a purpose without strict accountability for spending. Rep. Gleim asked if surplus funds could be allocated to teachers' salaries. Barnard said Philadelphia could allocate their reserve funds for cost-of-living and pay increases, provided they have the necessary reserves. Rep. Gleim also mentioned that the current funding formula directly ties charter costs to the debt or cost per student, which is \$28,000 per student. She asked if other states have decoupled charter tuition from these costs. Barnard discussed the complexities of Pennsylvania's pass-through funding model for charter schools and highlighted the challenges in ensuring fair funding distribution under the Pennsylvania system.

Rep. Gleim advocated for changes in the funding formula, suggesting it could resolve many issues. She highlighted discrepancies between funding and outcomes and shared a story about a parent of a child with autism who struggled to get support from the school district, eventually finding a solution in a charter school.

Rep. White thanked Mitchell for her advocacy efforts on behalf of her children, acknowledging the positive impact on their family and expressing sorrow for the challenges faced. She also praised Mitchell's bravery in speaking out and asked her what changes she would need to see from the school district to feel confident in its direction. Mitchell replied, "I want to see the change in the teachers, I want to see the change in the principal, I actually want to see more changes in the actual firm itself." She continued, "If they can see the change then, yeah, we'll be right on that train with them [and] if we don't see it, then why will we even bother?"

Rep. White expressed concern over the slow response times from the school district despite significant taxpayer funding and emphasized the need for accountability. She also brought up the Pennsylvania state budget and asked what the "cautionary tales" are to guide the legislature. Barnard discussed Gov. Josh Shapiro's "Ready to Learn" block grants aimed at addressing educational funding gaps but advised careful scrutiny of the allocation formulas to ensure fairness and avoid past political issues. He highlighted the challenges of meeting adequacy targets in public education funding, referencing New Jersey's struggles despite similar efforts, and stressed the importance of diligent allocation of new state funds. Rep. White asked about limitations in other states on the amount of debt that can be issued by school districts, such as municipal bonds, relative to a state's allocation. Barnard explained that school district debt limitations often relate to property tax restrictions, which in turn limit new debt capabilities. He cited Texas's efficiency audit law as an example of enhancing transparency and potentially affecting public support for new bond projects.

Rep. Marcell shared her experience as a former school board member dealing with school closures due to declining enrollment and economic downturns. She discussed the current enrollment trends in Philadelphia and the significant portion of state education funding the district receives, highlighting the disparity in funding and the necessity for tough decisions like school closures for financial sustainability. Rep. Marcell then inquired about best practices for school consolidation in urban areas. Barnard discussed the issue of declining school enrollments across many cities and states, especially post-COVID, and shared best practices for handling school closures. He emphasized the importance of a clear timeline and decision-making process and questioned why financial considerations were not prioritized in decisions about school closures. Rep. Marcell asked about the existence of a capital construction plan in the district, given the construction of three new school buildings, and whether there is a long-term strategy for maintaining these facilities. Barnard suggested that budgets are likely to allocate a certain amount annually for physical facilities improvement and construction. He mentioned Rep. White could provide more detailed information on the topic. Rep. White mentioned the school district's facilities planning process to address overcrowded schools in Northeast Philadelphia and half-empty schools in other parts of the city, acknowledging the challenge of managing such a large district.

Rep. Gleim criticized the inefficacy of higher funding in improving student outcomes in Philadelphia public schools, opining that there is an "honesty gap" rather than an adequacy gap. She emphasized the need for swift and transparent action among local, state and federal officials. She criticized the increase in administrative staff without corresponding improvements in education. She questioned the effectiveness of the current funding formula. Rep. Gleim suggested looking at innovative approaches to enhance the educational environment.

Rep. White discussed the unique situation of Philadelphia's school board being appointed rather than elected, expressing concern over the lack of taxpayer accountability. She highlighted the need for significant changes in the management of the school district's finances, pointing out an almost 30% increase in administrative positions over resources for classrooms and teachers. Rep. White emphasized the importance of improving efficiency and procedures to benefit students, families and taxpayers.

Chairman Rowe emphasized the importance of prioritizing students and reducing Harrisburg's interference to ensure prosperity in Pennsylvania. He mentioned the House Republican Caucus's support for adequate public school funding and the need for a flexible education system that meets diverse student needs. Chairman Rowe advocated for addressing failing schools and discussed the importance of funding various educational options, including government schools, school choice, earned income tax credit (EITC), opportunity scholarship tax credit (OSTC) and the potential for lifeline scholarships in the budget cycle. He stressed, "Every student, whether in Philadelphia or any part of the commonwealth, truly deserves access to that excellent education that allows them to pursue their American dream."



Bullet.in.Points

No Bullet.in.Points this week.

Cosponsor Memos

HCO1640 - Certified Registered Nurse Practitioner Pilot Program

Sponsor

Rep. Arvind Venkat (D)

Summary

Creates a certified registered nurse practitioner pilot program to allow CRNPs to practice as independent practitioners in health professional shortage areas only.

Intro Date

02/21/2025

Last Action

05/19/2025 H - Introduced HB1490

HCO1768 - State-related University Accountability Act

Sponsor

Rep. Charity Grimm Krupa (R)

Summary

Provides for greater oversight for state-related universities.

Intro Date

03/05/2025

Last Action

05/16/2025 H - Introduced HB1474

HCO2227 - Prescription Privileges for Psychologists**Sponsor**

Rep. Dan Frankel (D)

Summary

Defines educational requirements and the scope of practice for prescribing psychologists, describes the collaborative relationship between the prescribing psychologist and the patient's primary care provider and identifies the formulary for the medications that may be prescribed.

Intro Date

05/19/2025

Last Action

05/19/2025 H - Cosponsor memo filed

SCO46 - School Meals for All: No child should experience hunger in school**Sponsor**

Sen. Lindsey Marie Williams (D)

Summary

Expands the current no-cost breakfast program to include lunch.

Intro Date

12/02/2024

Last Action

05/22/2025 S - Introduced SB180

SCO569 - Changing the Date that School Districts Must Adopt Budget

Sponsor

Sen. Michele Brooks (R)

Summary

Changes the date that school districts adopt their school budget to July 31.

Intro Date

01/09/2025

Last Action

05/22/2025 S - Introduced SB761

SCO614 - Parental Notification of Students Involved in School Incidents

Sponsor

Sen. Patty Kim (D)

Summary

Requires all school districts to adopt policies and procedures for timely notification to parents, guardians, or custodial parents of students involved in incidents that occur on school property.

Intro Date

01/14/2025

Last Action

05/22/2025 S - Introduced SB749

SCO1117 - Strengthening Pennsylvania's Military Educational Programs

Sponsor

Sen. Tracy Pennycuick (R)

Summary

Aims to strengthen and modernize Pennsylvania's Educational Assistance Program (EAP) and the Military Family Education Program (MFEP).

Intro Date

05/22/2025

Last Action

05/22/2025 S - Cosponsor memo filed

Basic Ed Bill Actions

HB865 - An Act amending Title 51 (Military Affairs) of the Pennsylvania Consolidated Statutes, in Military Family Education Program, further providing for definitions, for eligibility, for Military Family Education Program grants and for limitations.

Sponsor

Rep. Arvind Venkat (D)

Summary

(PN 1705) Amends Title 51 (Military Affairs), in Military Family Education Program, further providing for definitions, for eligibility, for Military Family Education Program grants and for limitations. Revises the definition of “eligible member.” Makes editorial changes. Stipulates that a Military Family Education Program benefit shall only be renewable with each subsequent six-year service commitment in the Pennsylvania National Guard. Revises the general rule and assignment of benefits to include each benefit earned. Effective in 60 days. (Prior PN: 890)

Intro Date

03/11/2025

Actions

05/14/2025 H - Voted Favorably From Committee - House Appropriations

05/14/2025 H - Re-reported as committed - House Appropriations

05/14/2025 H - Laid out for discussion

05/14/2025 H - Third consideration and final passage

05/22/2025 S - Referred to - Senate Veterans Affairs and Emergency Preparedness

HB1473 - An Act amending the act of March 10, 1949 (P.L.30, No.14), known as the Public School Code of 1949, in higher education accountability and transparency, providing for department approval for campus closures.

Sponsor

Rep. Charity Grimm Krupa (R)

Summary

(PN 1734) Amends the Public School Code, in higher education accountability and transparency, providing for department approval for campus closures. Lists General Assembly findings. Provides that if a state-related university intends to close a campus, the state-related university shall submit an alternative education plan to the department prior to the closure, beginning with the 2025-2026 school year and each continuing school year thereafter. Details what the plan may include. Instructs the department to review and make a determination for a submitted plan. Asserts that if a state-related university fails to submit a plan as required under this section or the department disapproves a plan, the state-related university may not receive payment from an appropriation for that fiscal year. Provides definitions. Effective immediately.

Intro Date

05/21/2025

Actions

05/16/2025 H - Introduced

HB1474 - An Act amending the act of March 10, 1949 (P.L.30, No.14), known as the Public School Code of 1949, in higher education accountability and transparency, providing for requirements for significant reduction of operations of State-related universities.

Sponsor

Rep. Charity Grimm Krupa (R)

Summary

(PN 1735) Amends the Public School Code, in higher education accountability and transparency, providing for requirements for significant reduction of operations of state-related universities. Lists General Assembly findings. Requires a board to develop a proposed implementation plan prior to the consolidation, transfer, closure or significant reduction of operations of the state-related university, beginning with the 2025-2026 school year and continuing each school year thereafter. Outlines the required contents for a plan. Directs the board to transmit copies of a proposed implementation plan and lists who shall receive it. Establishes a public comment period. Details required legislative action. Provides definitions. Effective immediately.

Intro Date

05/21/2025

Actions

05/16/2025 H - Introduced

05/21/2025 H - Referred to - House Education

HB1489 - An Act amending the act of March 10, 1949 (P.L.30, No.14), known as the Public School Code of 1949, establishing the Lifeline Scholarship Program and the Lifeline Scholarship Fund; and conferring powers and imposing duties on the State Treasury and Auditor General.

Sponsor

Rep. Clint Owlett (R)

Summary

(PN 1743) Amends the Public School Code, establishing the Lifeline Scholarship Program as a program in the State Treasury to provide scholarships to help eligible students pay tuition, school-related fees and special education services fees for attendance at a participating nonpublic school and establishing the Lifeline Scholarship Fund in the State Treasury; and conferring powers and imposing duties on the State Treasury and Auditor General. Provides the scope of the article and definitions. Requires notice to parents and notice to the State Treasury. Directs the State Treasury to develop an application form. Outlines the application and approval process. Requires the State Treasury to enter into or renew an agreement with the. Details what the agreement shall provide. Asserts that the agreement shall be valid for one school year. Provides for the termination and the renewal of the agreement. Specifies that a parent of more than one child who is a scholarship recipient must enter into a separate agreement for each of the children. Directs the State Treasury to provide the parent with a written explanation of the authorized uses of the money in the lifeline scholarship account. Requires the State Treasury to establish a lifeline scholarship account for the scholarship recipient. Outlines the sum of money the State Treasury shall deposit into lifeline scholarship accounts. Mandates that the State Treasury deposit the money for each scholarship into a lifeline scholarship account on a schedule determined by the State Treasury in consultation with the department. Provides for payments to participating nonpublic schools. Specifies the purposes for which money deposited into a lifeline scholarship account may be used. Prohibits a participating nonpublic school that receives a payment for qualified education expenses from refunding, rebating or otherwise directly sharing any portion of the payment with the parent who made the payment.

Establishes tax consequences and status of awards. Provides for what the Lifeline Scholarship Fund shall consist of and appropriates money in the fund on a continuing basis to the State Treasury for scholarships. Lists the duties of the State Treasury. Permits the State Treasury to contract with a third party to administer the program. Provides for contracting and regulations. Permits the Auditor General to conduct a random audit of lifeline scholarship accounts, refer cases of suspected fraudulent misuse of lifeline scholarship accounts to the Inspector General for investigation and notify the State Treasury of cases of suspected fraudulent misuse that are referred to the Inspector General. Outlines the duties of participating nonpublic schools. Allows the State Treasury to bar a nonpublic school from participation in the program if certain conditions are met. Requires notice and allows for appeals. Provides for the duties of resident school districts. Requires an annual report on the program to the General Assembly and details the contents of the report. Effective immediately.

Intro Date

05/21/2025

Actions

05/19/2025 H - Introduced

05/21/2025 H - Referred to - House Education

SB180 - 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 Nonprofit School Food Program, repealing provisions relating to school lunch and breakfast reimbursement and establishing the Universal School Meal Program and the Universal School Meal Fund; and making an interfund transfer and an appropriation.

Sponsor

Sen. Lindsey Marie Williams (D)

Summary

No summary available yet.

Intro Date

05/22/2025

Actions

05/22/2025 S - Introduced

05/22/2025 S - Referred to - Senate Education

SB749 - An Act amending the act of March 10, 1949 (P.L.30, No.14), known as the Public School Code of 1949, in student supports, providing for parental notification.

Sponsor

Sen. Patty Kim (D)

Summary

No summary available yet.

Intro Date

05/22/2025

Actions

05/22/2025 S - Introduced

05/22/2025 S - Referred to - Senate Education

SB759 - An Act amending the act of March 10, 1949 (P.L.30, No.14), known as the Public School Code of 1949, in grounds and buildings, providing for certified point-of-use filter required; establishing the Safe Schools Drinking Water Fund; and imposing duties on the Department of Environmental Protection.

Sponsor

Sen. Devlin J. Robinson (R)

Summary

No summary available yet.

Intro Date

05/22/2025

Actions

05/22/2025 S - Introduced

05/22/2025 S - Referred to - Senate Institutional Sustainability and Innovation

SB760 - An Act amending the act of March 10, 1949 (P.L.30, No.14), known as the Public School Code of 1949, in grounds and buildings, providing for radon testing.

Sponsor

Sen. Devlin J. Robinson (R)

Summary

No summary available yet.

Intro Date

05/22/2025

Actions

05/22/2025 S - Introduced

05/22/2025 S - Referred to - Senate Institutional Sustainability and Innovation

SB781 - 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 definitions and providing for mental health days.

Sponsor

Sen. John I. Kane (D)

Summary

No summary available yet.

Intro Date

05/22/2025

Actions

05/22/2025 S - Introduced

05/22/2025 S - Referred to - Senate Education

Higher Ed Bill Actions

HB1472 - An Act amending the act of March 10, 1949 (P.L.30, No.14), known as the Public School Code of 1949, in higher education accountability and transparency, providing for economic and workforce impact review by State-related universities; and imposing duties of the Department of Labor and Industry.

Sponsor

Rep. Charity Grimm Krupa (R)

Summary

(PN 1733) Amends the Public School Code, in higher education accountability and transparency, providing for economic and workforce impact review by state-related universities; and imposing duties of the Department of Labor and Industry. Lists General Assembly findings. Directs a board of trustees to conduct an economic and workforce impact study prior to the closure of a campus within the state-related university, beginning with the 2025-2026 school year and each continuing school year thereafter. Requires the selection of an independent research institution to conduct the study. Provides those who shall receive the results of the study. Outlines conditions under which a board of trustees may not approve a closure. Explains that it is a condition of receipt of payment from an appropriation to a state-related university that the state-related university has complied with this section. Provides several definitions. Effective immediately.

Last Action

05/21/2025 H - Referred to - House Education

Actions

05/16/2025 H - Introduced

05/21/2025 H - Referred to - House Education

HB1473 - An Act amending the act of March 10, 1949 (P.L.30, No.14), known as the Public School Code of 1949, in higher education accountability and transparency, providing for department approval for campus closures.

Sponsor

Rep. Charity Grimm Krupa (R)

Summary

(PN 1734) Amends the Public School Code, in higher education accountability and transparency, providing for department approval for campus closures. Lists General Assembly findings. Provides that if a state-related university intends to close a campus, the state-related university shall submit an alternative education plan to the department prior to the closure, beginning with the 2025-2026 school year and each continuing school year thereafter. Details what the plan may include. Instructs the department to review and make a determination for a submitted plan. Asserts that if a state-related university fails to submit a plan as required under this section or the department disapproves a plan, the state-related university may not receive payment from an appropriation for that fiscal year. Provides definitions. Effective immediately.

Last Action

05/21/2025 H - Referred to - House Education

Actions

05/16/2025 H - Introduced

05/21/2025 H - Referred to - House Education

HB1474 - An Act amending the act of March 10, 1949 (P.L.30, No.14), known as the Public School Code of 1949, in higher education accountability and transparency, providing for requirements for significant reduction of operations of State-related universities.

Sponsor

Rep. Charity Grimm Krupa (R)

Summary

(PN 1735) Amends the Public School Code, in higher education accountability and transparency, providing for requirements for significant reduction of operations of state-related universities. Lists General Assembly findings. Requires a board to develop a proposed implementation plan prior to the consolidation, transfer, closure or significant reduction of operations of the state-related university, beginning with the 2025-2026 school year and continuing each school year thereafter. Outlines the required contents for a plan. Directs the board to transmit copies of a proposed implementation plan and lists who shall receive it. Establishes a public comment period. Details required legislative action. Provides definitions. Effective immediately.

Last Action

05/21/2025 H - Referred to - House Education

Actions

05/16/2025 H - Introduced

05/21/2025 H - Referred to - House Education

HB1490 - An Act amending the act of May 22, 1951 (P.L.317, No.69), known as The Professional Nursing Law, providing for Certified Registered Nurse Practitioner Pilot Program.

Sponsor

Rep. Arvind Venkat (D)

Summary

(PN 1744) Amends the Professional Nursing Law, providing for Certified Registered Nurse Practitioner Pilot Program. Directs the board to establish the program to allow an eligible certified registered nurse practitioner (CRNP) to receive an additional certification to practice as an independent practitioner in a health professional shortage area. Outlines the criteria that need to be met for a CRNP to participate in the program. Provides what a CRNP may do while practicing in a health professional shortage area under the program. Subjects CRNPs to biennial renewals. Limits CRNPs to primary care. Specifies that CRNPs are accountable to the board, nursing profession and patients, outlining the duties they shall have. Asserts that the board shall be responsible for administering the program. Directs the board to establish a subcommittee to assist in administering the program, specifying who the subcommittee shall consist of. Recognizes a CRNP as a primary care provider while participating in the program. Requires the Joint State Government Commission to conduct a study on the program five years after the effective date, and within six months of commencing the study, submit the study to the Senate Consumer Protection and Professional Licensure Committee and the House Professional Licensure Committee to evaluate the program. Outlines what the study shall include. Directs the department to notify the board and subcommittee immediately upon receiving notification of an alleged violation. Mandates that the board promulgate regulations. Specifies what temporary promulgated regulations shall not be subject to and what nothing shall be construed to mean. Expires the program six years after the effective date and provides what shall apply upon expiration of the program. Defines "health professional shortage area" and "program." Sections 8.10(g) and (m) and Section 2 of the act are effective immediately. The remainder of this act is effective in 180 days.

Last Action

05/21/2025 H - Referred to - House Professional Licensure

Actions

05/19/2025 H - Introduced

05/21/2025 H - Referred to - House Professional Licensure

Upcoming Events

WEDNESDAY – 7/09/2025

TBA, State Board of Education

Board Meeting, 333 Market Street, Harrisburg

In the News

[05/16/2025 - PDE: Shapiro Administration Announces 2026 Pennsylvania Teacher of the Year Finalists](#)

[05/16/2025 - Armanini Disappointed in Penn State Campus Closures](#)

[05/16/2025 - Mastriano Condemns Proposed Closure of Penn State Mont Alto Campus](#)

[05/16/2025 - Public Schools Increased Spending to \\$23,000 Per Student, Ballooned Reserves While Enrollment Declined](#)

[05/19/2025 - Environmental Education needs continued Federal Funding](#)

[05/20/2025 - DHS: Shapiro Administration Highlights Proposal to Expand Pennsylvania's Child Care Workforce, Support Parents and Families in Philadelphia](#)

[05/20/2025 - Sen. Tim Kearney & Reps. Heather Boyd, Gina H. Curry, and Jennifer O'Mara Announce Over \\$3.1M in Solar for Schools Grants to Support Delco Schools](#)

[05/20/2025 - Senator Nick Pisciotto Announces Over \\$360,000 in Solar for Schools Grant for Clairton City School District](#)

[05/20/2025 - Shapiro Administration Invests More Than \\$22.6 Million to Help Schools Across Pennsylvania Lower Electricity Costs and Create Jobs by Installing Solar Panels](#)

[05/20/2025 - Langerholc, Burns Announce State Funding to Help Central Cambria School District Install Solar Energy](#)

[05/20/2025 - Senate Democratic Leader Jay Costa Announces Two Solar for Schools Grant Recipients in the 43rd Senatorial District](#)

[05/20/2025 - Kuzma Introduces Bill to Create Back-to-School Sales Tax Holiday](#)

[05/20/2025 - Bill to Offer Lifeline to Struggling Students Reintroduced, Say White, Owlett](#)

[05/21/2025 - Fiedler celebrates first-ever Solar for Schools grant recipients; \\$22.6 million awarded](#)

[05/21/2025 - Governor Shapiro Visits Scranton School District to Highlight Historic Investments in K-12 Education and Real Results for Pennsylvania Students, Underscoring the Need for his Budget Proposal](#)

[05/22/2025 - Governor Shapiro Visits Pottstown High School to Highlight Historic Investments in K-12 Education and Real Results for Pennsylvania Students, Underscoring the Need for his Budget Proposal](#)

[05/22/2025 - DEP: Shapiro Administration Awards Over \\$1.1 Million to Environmental Education Projects that Foster Environmental Stewardship Among Youth and Adults](#)

Education Recap is a comprehensive weekly report on legislative and executive actions on education related legislation in the Pennsylvania Capitol and is compiled and edited by PLS.

For subscription information, questions or more information contact PLS at mypls@mypls.com or 717-236-6984. Thank you, Deborah, Cheryl, Derek, Hattie, Sam, Grace, Aaron, Christian, Katie, Zoe, Daniel, Kyle, Nicholas, Dominic, Julia and Noah.

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