

Education Recap



Sept. 19 – 25, 2025

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SESSION STATUS

At 11:03 a.m. on Tuesday, September 23, 2025, the House met briefly in non-voting session and now stands adjourned until Monday, September 29, 2025, at 12:00 p.m., unless sooner recalled by the Speaker.

At 1:12 p.m. on Wednesday, September 10, 2025, the Senate stands in recess until Friday, October 3, 2025, at 12:00 p.m. for non-voting session.

UPCOMING SESSION DAYS

House

Sept. 29-30
Oct. 1, 6-8, 27-29
Nov. 17-19
Dec. 8-10 (NV), 15-17

Senate

Oct. 3 (NV), 6-8, 20-22, 27-29
Nov. 17-19
Dec. 8-9

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

PA PRESS CLUB WELCOMES PSEA PRESIDENT

By Julia Walters, Pennsylvania Legislative Services | September 22, 2025

The PA Press Club held a luncheon and Q&A today with Pennsylvania State Education Association (PSEA) President Aaron Chapin.

Francine Schertzer, president, PA Press Club, thanked several individuals and introduced Chapin as the luncheon's guest speaker. She outlined his career as an elementary and middle school teacher for 25 years before working with PSEA. Schertzer highlighted Chapin's commitments to addressing teacher and staff shortages as well as education funding inequities.

Chapin explained how he travels around the commonwealth meeting with educators as PSEA president. He recalled meeting "exceptional" educators who help students build community and leadership skills while "connecting them with the world around them." Chapin explained PSEA's focus on advocating for public schools and students and highlighted goals for "family-sustaining pay" and safe working conditions. He described his career teaching middle schoolers as "consistently challenging," but they reminded him of "why teaching matters." Chapin stated that teaching is a rewarding but difficult job. He mentioned working his way up to PSEA's presidency and expressed enthusiasm for the opportunities to "brag" about Pennsylvania's educators and their successes. Chapin explained hearing their "stories of struggle" as well. He described "astronomical" levels of behavioral and mental health challenges for students. Chapin outlined several factors for these difficulties, including "lingering" effects of COVID-19, underfunding, low wages, "crisis-level" staff shortages and an "unprecedented campaign in Washington D.C. to undermine public education." He accused some politicians of "losing sight" of students' and teachers' best interests. Chapin recalled the Pennsylvania Commonwealth Court's ruling stating Pennsylvania's education funding was unconstitutional. He mentioned, since the ruling, the state has seen "historic" investments in public education for school building repairs, more science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) programs and increased "literacy coaching." Chapin added he wants to see continuing investments in the upcoming 2025-2026 state budget. He recalled the commonwealth's teacher and staff shortage and thanked the Shapiro administration for creating a student teacher stipend program to attract new teachers to Pennsylvania. Chapin highlighted that PSEA has partnered with Phi Kappa Delta (PDK) International to bring Educators Rising to Pennsylvania, which allows high school students to explore teaching opportunities in their own schools. Chapin stated the program has expanded from a "couple dozen" students to over 350 in one year.

Chapin explained that teachers and staff need "family-sustaining incomes." He noted how Pennsylvania is in the top 25% for teachers' starting salaries across the nation but said it's "not good enough." Chapin mentioned that income for teachers has declined over the years and called for legislation advocating for a base pay of \$60,000 for starting teachers. He additionally called for support staff to receive at least \$20 per hour. Chapin added that Maryland, New Jersey and New York have similar legislation in place. He mentioned the importance of competing with surrounding states to attract and retain teachers and staff. Chapin expressed his desire as PSEA president to continually speak with and learn from Pennsylvania's educators and relay their

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concerns to lawmakers in Harrisburg. He stressed Pennsylvania's success "starts with a world-class public education."

Schertzer initiated the Q&A portion of the luncheon.

Is there a direct correlation between tax dollar spending and student success, and what proof do you have?

Chapin replied, "If you want the best coming out of our public schools, you've got to invest." He explained how historically underfunded schools and poverty are known factors for test scores. Chapin highlighted the "great results" seen in the adequacy funding scale in one year and stated Pennsylvania needs to continue to invest in public education, per the Commonwealth Court's ruling.

There's a well-known shortage of special education, math and science teachers across Pennsylvania. Would you support a differential pay scale for these teachers?

Chapin said Pennsylvania should be investing in education altogether in "every area, every educator, every form, every category of teacher." He acknowledged the rise in special education students across the commonwealth. Chapin mentioned that if the state properly funds education and pays livable wages, more educators in all different areas will be attracted to the state.

Was it a mistake for former governor Tom Wolf to shut down our schools during the pandemic lockdown?

Chapin answered, "I think it's easy to look back now and to say what we should or shouldn't have done." He said the former Wolf administration was "working with the science" at the time. Chapin mentioned lawmakers attempted to do what they could to protect students' and teachers' health and safety. He highlighted the importance of looking toward the future rather than the past.

Last year, a cyber-attack on PSEA exposed the personal data of more than 500,000 individuals. What specific failures led to this breach, and why should anyone trust your organization to safeguard sensitive information in the future?

Chapin responded that "no company is, unfortunately, safe" from cyber-attacks. He added that PSEA is doing "everything humanly possible" to keep members protected.

With local taxpayers footing the bill for costs associated with the state budget delay, does the mandate on school district fund balance limits still make sense?

Chapin called fund balances a "prudent" way for businesses or organizations to protect themselves. He said the average school district in Pennsylvania has a fund balance of 87 days and added that today is the 84th day without a state budget. "Fund balances are a way for a district to protect the community and make sure that the students are getting the education that they deserve," Chapin stated.

Would you support a budget deal that includes vouchers for students in the lowest-performing schools if Gov. Josh Shapiro is getting his desired basic education funding increase?

Chapin replied that vouchers are a "terrible idea." He said public money should go to public schools. Chapin highlighted a voucher program in Michigan, which yielded "devastating results." He added, "Vouchers don't work."

Will student mental health services include sexual identity and/or gender identity, and if so, will students be informed?

Chapin said the pandemic highlighted how important mental health services are for students. He called mental health a "huge concern" for Pennsylvania students and emphasized PSEA's goal of providing well-rounded student support rather than solely focusing on academics. "We're trying to make sure that they're getting everything that they need," Chapin stated.

What are some of the strategies that districts are investing in with the adequacy and equity dollars in the Ready to Learn Block Grant?

Chapin stated that more educators are coming to Pennsylvania and highlighted an increase in STEM and literacy programs. He noted more investments going toward building renovations and updates. Chapin said educators are "extremely thrilled" with the progress made with adequacy funding.

What is PSEA doing to address teacher shortages and build a stronger teacher pipeline in Pennsylvania?

Chapin said the student teacher stipend program has been helpful to attract and retain teachers. He additionally mentioned getting high schoolers interested in education to "show them what it's truly like being a teacher." Chapin said PSEA advocates for higher salaries for teachers and support staff as well.

How do you support PSEA teacher unions in cybers, and at the same time, advocate to cut cybers at unreasonable costs?

Chapin responded that PSEA supports cyber and charter schools. "Even though we believe that there is a place for cyber and charter schools, we also believe that there's a lot of overspending that's going on, particularly when it comes to special education," he added. Chapin called for reforms and more regulations for cyber and charter schools.

Why does PSEA single out Senate President Pro Tempore Kim Ward (R-Westmoreland) and Senate Republicans for the delayed budget over school choice but not Gov. Shapiro or House Democrats?

Chapin said the House Democrats passed a budget with proper public education funding, though it did not pass through the Senate. “We’re now 12 weeks later, and there still has not been a budget that has been something that we can call responsible,” he said. Chapin added that the Senate passed a budget that “flatlined” education.

What are PSEA’s thoughts on the federal One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBBA)?

Chapin said OBBBA will have “detrimental effects” on public schools. He mentioned “thousands” of students who rely on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) will have difficulty learning if they come to school hungry. Chapin highlighted many school programs that depend on Medicaid as well. He called the bill “disappointing.”

The Wall Street Journal from September 9, 2025, says, “12th-grade math and reading scores in the U.S. hit a new low, declines began even before the pandemic.” Why should we keep doing the same thing when results keep getting worse?

Chapin stated Pennsylvania public schools have been historically underfunded for “generations.” He said the first year of adequacy funding has been helpful, but results won’t turn around immediately. “Continue with the investments, and you’re going to see amazing results,” Chapin remarked.

There continues to be an interest in more wraparound services delivered in schools. Is this a classroom distraction for teachers?

Chapin responded that teachers do “amazing things” for their schools and are “adaptable.” He continued, “We do whatever it takes for our students to be successful, and it’s just that simple.”

Pennsylvania’s student population is in decline. So why does PCEA work with state and federal money to organizations like Planned Parenthood? Why does the union want fewer students?

Chapin acknowledged the Pennsylvania population has dropped “a little bit,” but emphasized the importance of continuing to invest in public education for the state’s “1.7 million students.”

What is the most interesting thing that you’ve learned since serving as president of PCEA?

Chapin said he enjoys traveling across Pennsylvania to visit different schools and educators. “I’m just so proud of what takes place, and I think there’s no better state when it comes to public education than here in Pennsylvania,” he said.

Schertzer thanked Chapin for his appearance with the PA Press Club. She stated the next PA Press Club Luncheon will be Monday, October 27, with Sen. Greg Rothman (R-Cumberland).



SCHOOL DISTRICTS VOICE CONCERN OVER DELAYED STATE BUDGET

By Derek Danneker, Pennsylvania Legislative Services | September 25, 2025

School business officials and administrators highlighted how the delayed budget has forced difficult decisions for their districts at a press conference in the Main Capitol Rotunda today.

Hannah Barrick, executive director, Pennsylvania Association of School Business Officials (PASBO), stated that Pennsylvania’s public schools should have received \$3 billion in state funding. She continued that this includes the second installment of state special education funding, state retirement and social security reimbursement, the additional pupil transportation subsidy and more. She added that some other school districts haven’t received federal funding that was approved for the current fiscal year because it is “tied up” as a component of the current budget.

Dr. Sherri Smith, executive director, Pennsylvania Association of School Administrators (PASA), described the impact of the state’s budget impasse on 500 operational school districts. She explained that decisions to postpone purchases and hiring are turning into decisions to postpone programs, resources and staffing for the year. “Schools are being harmed, kids are being harmed and education is being harmed,” she said. Smith emphasized the urgent need for a state budget to prevent further harm to educational programs and services.

Kenneth Kerchenske, superintendent, Cambria Heights School District, highlighted how the budget delay is “particularly unfair” to his district, which provides a number of volunteer programs and passes its budget on time. Anticipating increased energy costs, Kerchenske noted the school district entered into a power purchase agreement and signed a contract for a rooftop solar array. “As our students and teachers have been back in their classrooms for over a month, the district cannot continue to operate much longer without state sources of funding,” he said. He highlighted the loss of anticipated interest income and the local funding of the pre-K program due to the budget delay. He called for the legislature to provide a fair solution to cyber charter school funding and remain mindful of the burden the existing funding formula places on families in his school district.

Matthew Shields, director of facilities and building operations, Lancaster School District, detailed the district’s reliance on a \$35 million loan to cover expenses due to \$20 million in delayed state funding. He asked if the district should use the funding to delay essential maintenance or risk the ability to meet payroll. He noted his district’s high school needs to replace a leaking hot water storage tank, and without the repair, the state boiler inspector could condemn the unit and force the closure of the school. Shields mentioned other work is needed on heating and air conditioning systems. “These are necessary, unbudgeted and currently unfunded repairs,” he said. “This is not about luxury, it’s about basic infrastructure, heat, water and safety.” Shields added the district is asking for the funding that was promised so that they can do their jobs effectively and responsibly.

Thomas Butler, executive director, Appalachia Intermediate Unit 8, asserted that the budget deadlock has forced schools into crisis management, with one district borrowing \$5.8 million to meet payroll and a total projected borrowing of \$49 million by nine districts. He continued that this borrowing will incur \$2.4 million in interest payments, diverting funds from educational initiatives. “Right now, because of the state budget impasse, we’re unable to access critical federal funds to help us deliver those services in Pennsylvania; those funds are frozen until the state budget passes,” said Butler. “No state funds, no federal funds and with no ability to levy taxes, many on a user being forced to borrow money just to stay afloat, spending precious dollars on legal banking fees instead of on kids... We need a state budget now; our schools and our kids can’t afford to wait.”

Jack Hurst, business administrator, Mahanoy Area School District, mentioned the district’s financial challenges due to not receiving approximately \$2 million in state funding, constituting nearly 70% of its budget. He said the delay has caused a “serious cash flow gap,” and the district may be forced to borrow money, which will cause other expenses for fees and interest that could otherwise be spent on students. “Every day that passes without action at the state capitol adds costs and uncertainty for all,” he said.

Joe DiLucente, superintendent, East Allegheny School District, emphasized that students “cannot afford to be caught in the crossfire of political gridlock.” He explained that 30% of their students receive special education services, but the district’s plan to expand its continuum of care is on hold. He added that the district’s aging buildings require immediate improvements. “Delaying these projects has meant choosing costly emergency repairs over proactive maintenance,” he said. “Harrisburg inaction, coupled with an economy in flux, magnifies the financial difficulties our district faces through no fault of our own.” He urged the legislature to pass a state budget that recognizes education as a “critical investment.”

Michael Statler, director of business operations, Carlisle Area School District, reported that 52% of his district is economically disadvantaged and 20% need special education. He highlighted that even with state funding, the district would be facing a deficit of about \$100,000. He explained that due to questions regarding the district’s final allocation limits, they have to hold off on investments, like computers and special education staff. “If the budget impasse continues, we will need to consider taking out a short term loan, an option that comes with significant interest and puts an unnecessary financial burden on our local taxpayers,” he said.

Shawn Ford, superintendent, PENNCREST School District, voiced frustration with Harrisburg’s inability to pass a budget on time. He pointed out the financial challenges his district faces, including a gap in special education funding and the costs associated with cyber school. Ford stressed the district’s responsible budgeting practices and urged legislators to resolve the deadlock by passing a budget that ensures fair funding.

Dylan Wyatt, director of advocacy, PASBO, underscored the financial challenges school districts are experiencing due to the state budget impasse. He stated that districts are already missing over \$3 billion, which is expected to rise to \$5 billion in less than a month. Wyatt emphasized the need for decision-makers to negotiate and reach an agreement to support students, school districts and communities. He thanked education leaders for their work over the past 12 weeks to keep critical programs open for students and communities.



Committee News

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

House Education Committee

09/22/2025, 11:00 a.m., Easy Passyunk Community Center, 1025 Mifflin Street, Philadelphia
Pennsylvania Legislative Services

The committee held a public hearing on school facilities and [HB 1701](#).

[HB 1701](#) – (PN 2101) Amends the Public School Code, in grounds and buildings, further providing for referendum or public hearing required prior to construction or lease; providing an article for school facilities; establishing the Public School Facility Advisory Committee; in construction and renovation of buildings by school entities, repealing provisions relating to building condition assessments; and imposing duties on the Department of Education (PDE). Includes the addition of administrative space as a secondary building as part of the applicable aggregate building expenditure standard for the total amount calculated for each building or substantial addition. Adds article VII-A and provides several definitions. Establishes the powers and duties of PDE. Stipulates the collection of information from each public school facility. Outlines required information. Requires PDE to develop a form and electronic process for each school entity to submit the required information no later than April 1, 2027, and for each school entity to submit the information no later than December 31, 2027. Permits the provision of technical assistance. Mandates updating inventories beginning with the 2028-2029 school year and every three years thereafter. Establishes the duties of the Public School Facility Advisory Committee. Details the committee's member composition. Outlines the frequency of committee meetings. Asserts that the members serve without compensation but are reimbursed for necessary expenses incurred in the performance of their duties. Mandates the development of a statewide facility condition assessment. Provides applicability of the assessment. Requires reporting and lists the required contents. Stipulates that within one year of its receipt of a facility condition assessment under section 705-A(c), each school entity shall develop a plan for the modernization of its facilities based upon the assessment results and shall post the plan on its website. Requires the installation of a secure master key box and for immediate notification to local law enforcement of any changes to the locks, doors or other access control devices on the main entrances or other critical access points of the school building. Repeals the section regarding building condition assessments. The amendment of section 701.1 of the act is effective in 60 days. The remainder of the act is effective immediately.

Chairman Peter Schweyer (D-Lehigh) emphasized the importance of discussing state funding and standards for educational facilities, mentioning the need for technology, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance and overall healthiness in schools.

Minority Chairman Bryan Cutler (R-Lancaster) acknowledged the significance of the facilities issue, recalling the challenges posed by a weak tax base in his own district, which led to adopting a higher local income tax to fund schools. He expressed interest in exploring efficient solutions for educational facilities.

Rep. Elizabeth Fiedler (D-Philadelphia), prime sponsor of HB 1701, highlighted the crisis of outdated and unsafe school buildings in Pennsylvania, sharing a personal anecdote about her children's school temporarily closing due to asbestos. She outlined HB 1701, which would create a statewide school facilities inventory to assess conditions, prioritize repairs and ensure effective use of taxpayer dollars.

Jessica Sites, assistant director, Bureau of Budget and Fiscal Management, PDE, discussed the department's efforts in investing in public school infrastructure, mentioning \$250 million appropriated via the Public School Facilities Improvements Grant Program (PSFIG) for improvements over the last two budget cycles. She emphasized the challenge of gathering comprehensive data on school infrastructure needs and the importance of establishing a statewide assessment and inventory, voicing her support for HB 1701.

Chairman Schweyer asked for historical context on the commonwealth's past contributions to school facilities. Sites provided historical spending data, noting that \$567 million was spent in 2016 to clear a backlog and a total of \$2.8 billion was spent from the fiscal year 2016-2017 to 2025, averaging about \$300 million annually. Chairman Schweyer asked if PDE knew how much school districts have spent on improvements. Sites said she did not have that information in front of her but could gather it from annual financial reports. Chairman Schweyer discussed the challenges of outdated financial reports leading to increased local tax burdens and the lack of real data on school districts. He inquired about data that the department would like to see gathered which is currently not available. Sites said the department is currently working with partners to collect data through a federal grant, focusing on basic information like square footage and building counts. She mentioned hiring two staff members to assist with funding for building repairs.

Rep. Fiedler asked about the understanding of the magnitude of problems with school buildings in Pennsylvania. Sites acknowledged the difficulty in quantifying the extent of the problems and the challenges in obtaining clear data from school districts.

Timothy Shrom, director of research, Pennsylvania Association of School Business Officials (PASBO), discussed the importance of proactive approaches to school facilities management, including the PlanCon 2.0 process, which is a streamlined reimbursement system for major school construction projects installed by PDE. He emphasized the need for predictable funding and facilities assessments.

LeShawna Coleman, chief of staff of health and welfare funds, Philadelphia Federation of Teachers (PFT), supported HB 1701, emphasizing the need for state resources and cautioning against unfunded mandates. She discussed PFT's contributions to the health and education of Philadelphia students. She expressed concern over certain aspects of the bill, including the possibility of an unfunded mandate and the uncertainty of federal assistance.

Jerry Roseman, acting director of environmental science, PFT, emphasized integrating public health, environmental science and data collection in schools. He discussed the importance of setting standards for building conditions and the potential benefits of focused maintenance and operations.

Chairman Cutler asked about the adequacy of Philadelphia's current assessment program for buildings and infrastructure over the next five years and its relation to HB 1701. Roseman discussed the limitations of the current surveys by the Philadelphia School District, noting they lack strategic planning and do not fully engage the public or focus on maintenance, operations and cleaning. He stated HB 1701 would result in duplicative efforts but stressed the importance of using existing data for statewide improvements. Coleman emphasized the need for full funding to support school districts in addressing issues identified through assessments. Chairman Cutler inquired about the impact of governmental permits on school projects, specifically regarding delays and costs. Shrom mentioned significant delays in HVAC projects due to the design, build and permitting processes, which took up to three years. Chairman Cutler expressed concerns about the impact of governmental delays on facilities projects and asked for follow-up information on practical impacts.

Rep. Gina Curry (D-Delaware) asked about the necessity for legislative action to facilitate the sharing of assessment tools and methods. Roseman emphasized making assessment methods and tools publicly available and suggested utilizing resources like the National Center on School Infrastructure (NCSI) to distribute essential information statewide. He described a digital tool for building engineers that could facilitate a uniform approach to handling tasks.

Rep. Fiedler highlighted the importance of making data on school conditions accessible and understandable, asking Roseman to compare Pennsylvania's situation regarding school infrastructure to other states. Roseman said he did not have that specific data but noted that Pennsylvania is comprised of many small rural school districts with limited information. Rep. Fiedler asked about ways the state could assist in ensuring students and educators have access to healthy and modern school buildings, acknowledging the challenges faced by rising prices. Shrom emphasized the need for a policy that mandates accountability and data reporting from schools in exchange for funding, supporting the idea of a mandate for data collection to motivate school districts to allocate budget for facilities maintenance and planning.

Chairman Schweyer inquired about the impact of bond rates on new construction and significant remediation or expansion of schools. Shrom discussed how schools in Pennsylvania took advantage of historically low interest rates to refinance their debts and highlighted the necessity of a policy discussion on state support for school financing if interest rates rise. He also noted that many schools are focusing on making their existing buildings last through pay-as-you-go financing and setting aside budget reserves. Chairman Schweyer asked about the impact of property acquisition costs for new school construction in areas like Philadelphia, Lancaster County and Lehigh County. Shrom discussed the challenges of borrowing capacity and high costs of property acquisition for new construction, sharing an example of a school district forced to consider building a new school on its existing site due to the inability to find suitable land.

Chairman Schweyer asked the panel to discuss how investments in school facilities improve perceptions of public education and enhance student achievement, expressing concern over skepticism in Harrisburg regarding the effectiveness of increased educational spending. Coleman mentioned that improving ventilation in schools in Philadelphia has directly increased attendance by addressing high asthma rates among students. Roseman highlighted research data showing a link between lower ventilation rates and a deficiency in educational academic achievement. Chairman Schweyer discussed the importance of addressing physical infrastructure improvements in schools, linking such enhancements to better student outcomes, higher test scores and increased participation. He emphasized the financial constraints faced by the commonwealth and school districts and the need for ongoing dialogue about these issues. He also stressed the importance of security in the context of infrastructure improvements and called for public and staff vigilance to ensure security concerns are addressed in legislation and school policies.

Rep. Curry discussed challenges faced by the Upper Darby School District, including aging infrastructure and a lack of land. Shrom discussed the importance of a tiered approach to addressing school facility needs, emphasizing the need for broad data collection before moving to more specific projects tailored to individual schools. He warned against overburdening the initial stages with too detailed considerations.

Jeremiah Woodring, chairman of the government affairs committee, American Institute of Architects (AIA) Pennsylvania, supported HB 1701, highlighting the need to modernize outdated school facilities for better student achievement, retention and safety. He stressed the importance of establishing a public school facility advisory committee and a statewide school construction committee to guide updates, noting the facilities crisis affects both urban and rural areas, especially low-income and minority communities.

Garrett Lewis, executive vice president, SitelogIQ Northeast, highlighted the importance of improving Pennsylvania school facilities. He discussed SitelogIQ's work managing over \$1.7 billion in construction and offering energy services. He introduced mySiteIQ, a cloud-based application housing data from Pennsylvania school districts, to assist in assessing facility conditions and emphasized the potential for public-private collaboration in enhancing data collection and analysis.

Rick Evans, president, SitelogIQ Northeast, praised the state's public school facility improvement grant program for its success, highlighting that the initial \$250 million funding spurred over a billion dollars in school projects. He criticized the proposed six-month timeline for forming a new program as unrealistic and advocated for leveraging private sector expertise for more cost-effective data collection methods.

Chairman Cutler asked about the costs and time differences between retrofitting or upgrading existing buildings versus new construction. Lewis discussed the increasing costs and challenges of new school construction, emphasizing a trend towards renovation due to financial constraints. He highlighted the ability to complete significant work during the summer break and provided cost estimates for new facilities, mentioning the potential for using existing real estate to mitigate some costs. Chairman Cutler asked about adopting successful strategies from other states, emphasizing learning from various partnerships and areas of work. Lewis shared his experience from working in 14 states, praising Minnesota's approach to school facility investment, which includes requiring districts to collect data, plan and publicly share information to prioritize investments. He mentioned mySiteIQ as a model for Pennsylvania and stressed the importance of annual maintenance investments to qualify for competitive funding.

Rep. Jim Prokopiak (D-Bucks) criticized the inefficiency of Pennsylvania's current system, where 500 different school districts make decisions without a unified knowledge base, suggesting the need for a standardized approach. Evans noted that some districts approach them seeking grant money rather than planning a job, indicating a deviation from typical reasons for engagement. Rep. Prokopiak also criticized the current grant system for lacking an objective evaluation method and not comparing similar needs across districts, emphasizing the importance of prioritizing fundamental needs. Evans mentioned that schools become structurally deficient when facing severe issues, indicating the subjective judgment involved in deciding whether to renovate or rebuild. Roseman discussed the importance of upgrading schools to be code-compliant, highlighting the challenges of meeting modern building codes and the crucial role of architects and engineers in determining the most cost-effective solutions.

Rep. Fiedler asked Evans for his opinion on the appropriate timeframe for the committee to make recommendations, emphasizing efficient use of taxpayer dollars. Evans suggested that public entities could support the committee by working on high-level criteria within a six-month period, recommending the creation of a powerful database for data management. Lewis emphasized the effectiveness of private partnerships in delivering data to PDE, as seen in Minnesota.

Chairman Schweyer expressed openness to using third-party vendors for data collection, highlighting the importance of inclusive legislation that considers the capacity of rural school districts to participate in data collection. He noted that any legislation would not be vendor-specific, leaving decisions to the administration and department based on capacity needs.

Chairman Cutler expressed concerns over Act 70 of 2019, noting that school district assessments sometimes are not made public. He said funds should be spent cautiously, warning that funds could run out in just a few years after the program is initiated.

Chairman Schweyer highlighted the importance of addressing the physical conditions of school buildings to enhance student outcomes. He mentioned the challenges in accessing and coordinating data to track the impact of investments on education. He highlighted the importance of addressing the physical conditions of school buildings to enhance student outcomes. He mentioned the challenges in accessing and coordinating data to track the impact of investments on education. He concluded by noting that the committee will have a voting meeting on Tuesday, September 30, in Harrisburg.



Bullet.in.Points

PDA: FARM-TO-SCHOOL GRANT PROGRAM; 2025-2026 PROGRAM GUIDELINES

The Department of Agriculture announced the program requirements and application period for grants under the Farm-to-School program. Applications must be received no later than 4 p.m. on November 14, 2025, to be considered. Questions may be directed to Shane Kaplan, Bureau of Market Development, Department of Agriculture, 2301 North Cameron Street, Room 310, Harrisburg, PA 17110-9408, (717) 908-9248, RA-AGFARMTOSCHOOL@pa.gov. Additional information is available on the *Pennsylvania Bulletin*.

Cosponsor Memos

HCO2696 - Keeping School Bus Stops Away from Sex Offenders

Sponsor

Rep. Jeremy Shaffer (R)

Summary

Requires school boards to notify families if their child's bus stop is located near residences belonging to an individual required to register as a sex offender.

Intro Date

09/23/2025

Last Action

09/23/2025 H - Cosponsor memo filed

HCO2698 - Chronic Absence Prevention and Support Act

Sponsor

Rep. Manuel Guzman (D)

Summary

Establishes a flexible, evidence-based framework for schools to respond to chronic student absences through developing attendance improvement plans, emphasizing preventative and supportive measures rather than punitive actions.

Intro Date

09/23/2025

Last Action

09/23/2025 H - Cosponsor memo filed

SCO1306 - Enhanced Classroom Security Act

Sponsor

Sen. Doug Mastriano (R)

Summary

Aims to create a School Safety Certification Program allowing school districts, at their discretion, to authorize qualified employees to carry firearms or other lawful defensive weapons on school property after meeting strict certification requirements.

Intro Date

09/19/2025

Last Action

09/19/2025 S - Cosponsor memo filed

Basic Ed Bill Actions

HB1043 - 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, further providing for definitions, for possession and use of asthma inhalers and epinephrine auto-injectors, for school access to emergency epinephrine and for administration of epinephrine auto-injectors by school bus drivers and school crossing guards.

Sponsor

Rep. Arvind Venkat (D)

Summary

(PN 1132) Amends the Public School Code, in school health services, further providing for definitions, for possession and use of asthma inhalers and epinephrine auto-injectors, for school access to emergency epinephrine and for administration of epinephrine auto-injectors by school bus drivers and school crossing guards. Defines "epinephrine delivery system." Replaces references to "auto-injectors" throughout the act with "delivery systems." Effective in 60 days.

Intro Date

03/25/2025

Actions

03/25/2025 H - Introduced

03/25/2025 H - Referred to - House Health

09/22/2025 H - Meeting Scheduled - 10/07/2025, 9:00 AM - Voting Meeting (House Health), Room G-50, Irvis Office Building

HB1539 - An Act establishing the Electric School Bus Grant Program and the Electric School Bus Grant Program Fund; and imposing duties on the Department of Education.

Sponsor

Rep. David Madsen (D)

Summary

(PN 1810) The Electric School Bus Grant Program Act establishes the Electric School Bus Grant Program and the Electric School Bus Grant Program Fund; and imposes duties on the Department of Education (PDE). Provides definitions. Establishes the grant program within PDE to award grants for eligible costs to eligible applicants on a competitive basis. Directs the department to establish an application process and guidelines. Permits the department to randomly audit and monitor grantees. Directs the department to develop criteria for grantees under the program. Directs the department to require periodic reporting requirements for grantees. Directs the department to develop procedures for addressing a grantee's noncompliance. Directs the department to limit the amount of a grant so as not to exceed 100% of the difference between the cost of an internal combustion engine bus and the total eligible costs for an electric school bus. Stipulates that grants received by a school district will not be included when calculating the amount to be paid to a charter school. Establishes the grant program fund within the State Treasury. Provides for sources and deposits of funds. Permits the department to use up to 8% of the money in the fund to cover direct and indirect costs. Directs the department to reserve a portion of the money in the fund to provide ongoing technical assistance to school entities. Directs the department to submit a report summarizing the progress of the program. Stipulates that the report be sent to the chairman and minority chairman of the relevant committees in the House and Senate. Effective in 60 days.

Intro Date

06/03/2025

Actions

06/18/2025 H - Meeting Scheduled - 06/24/2025, 10:00 AM - Voting Meeting (House Education), Room 515, Irvis Office Building

06/24/2025 H - Voted favorably from committee with request to re-refer to the House Energy Committee - House Education

06/24/2025 H - Reported with request to re-refer to the House Energy Committee - House Education

06/24/2025 H - Re-referred to - House Energy

09/22/2025 H - Meeting Scheduled - 10/01/2025, 10:00 AM - Public Hearing (House Energy), Room G-50, Irvis Office Building

HB1701 - 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, further providing for referendum or public hearing required prior to construction or lease; providing for school facilities; establishing the Public School Facility Advisory Committee; in construction and renovation of buildings by school entities, repealing provisions relating to building condition assessments; and imposing duties on the Department of Education.

Sponsor

Rep. Elizabeth Fiedler (D)

Summary

(PN 2101) Amends the Public School Code, in grounds and buildings, further providing for referendum or public hearing required prior to construction or lease; providing an article for school facilities; establishing the Public School Facility Advisory Committee; in construction and renovation of buildings by school entities, repealing provisions relating to building condition assessments; and imposing duties on the Department of Education (PDE). Includes the addition of administrative space as a secondary building as part of the applicable aggregate building expenditure standard for the total amount calculated for each building or substantial addition. Adds article VII-A and provides several definitions. Establishes the powers and duties of PDE. Stipulates the collection of information from each public school facility. Outlines required information. Requires PDE to develop a form and electronic process for each school entity to submit the required information no later than April 1, 2027, and for each school entity to submit the information no later than December 31, 2027. Permits the provision of technical assistance. Mandates updating inventories beginning with the 2028-2029 school year and every three years thereafter. Establishes the duties of the Public School Facility Advisory Committee. Details the committee's member composition. Outlines the frequency of committee meetings. Asserts that the members serve without compensation but are reimbursed for necessary expenses incurred in the performance of their duties. Mandates the development of a statewide facility condition assessment. Provides applicability of the assessment. Requires reporting and lists the required contents. Stipulates that within one year of its receipt of a facility condition assessment under section 705-A(c), each school entity shall develop a plan for the modernization of its facilities based upon the assessment results and shall post the plan on its website. Requires the installation of a secure master key box and for immediate notification to local law enforcement of any changes to the locks, doors or other access control devices on the main entrances or other critical access points of the school building. Repeals the section regarding building condition assessments. The amendment of section 701.1 of the act is effective in 60 days. The remainder of the act is effective immediately.

Intro Date

07/09/2025

Actions

07/08/2025 H - Introduced

07/09/2025 H - Referred to - House Education

09/12/2025 H - Meeting Scheduled - 09/22/2025, 11:00 AM - Public Hearing (House Education), Easy Passyunk Community Center, 1025 Mifflin Street, Philadelphia, PA 19148

09/22/2025 H - Discussed during public hearing - House Education

09/24/2025 H - Meeting Scheduled - 09/30/2025, 10:00 AM - Voting Meeting (House Education), Room 140, Main Capitol

SB246 - 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 and employee notification of weapon incidents.

Sponsor

Sen. Jarrett Coleman (R)

Summary

(PN 1030) Amends the Public School Code, in student supports, adding a section to provide for parental and employee notification of weapon incidents. Directs schools to notify parents, guardians and school employees of an incident involving the possession of a weapon on any school property that constitutes a violation of Section 1317.2, 18 PA.C.S. § 912 (relating to possession of weapon on school property) or locally established policies of the school's governing body relating to weapons. Stipulates that the notification be made within 24 hours of the incident. Permits schools to limit notification to parents and guardians of students enrolled in or attending, or school employees assigned to, the school building where the incident occurred. Directs the school to notify parents, guardians and school employees if the school building at which the incident occurs shares a campus with other school buildings. Provides guidelines to be followed if the incident occurs at a school-sponsored activity or on a public conveyance providing transportation to or from a school or school-sponsored activity. Prohibits notification from containing personally identifiable information about a compliant student. Provides definitions. Effective in 60 days. (Prior PN: 199, 752, 764, 1009)

Intro Date

02/13/2025

Actions

06/30/2025 H - Laid out for discussion

07/01/2025 H - Voted Favorably From Committee - House Appropriations

07/01/2025 H - Re-reported as committed - House Appropriations

09/22/2025 H - Laid on the Table (Pursuant to House Rule 71)

09/23/2025 H - Removed from table

Higher Ed Bill Actions

HB1044 - An Act amending Title 35 (Health and Safety) of the Pennsylvania Consolidated Statutes, in epinephrine auto-injector entities, further providing for scope of chapter, for definitions and for epinephrine auto-injectors for authorized entities; and making an editorial change.

Sponsor

Rep. Arvind Venkat (D)

Summary

(PN 1133) Amends Title 35 (Health and Safety), in epinephrine auto-injector entities, further providing for scope of chapter, for definitions and for epinephrine auto-injectors for authorized entities; and making an editorial change. Revises the definition of "administer." Defines "epinephrine delivery system." Replaces references to "auto-injectors" throughout the act with "delivery systems." Effective in 60 days.

Intro Date

03/25/2025

Actions

03/25/2025 H - Introduced

03/25/2025 H - Referred to - House Health

09/22/2025 H - Meeting Scheduled - 10/07/2025, 9:00 AM - Voting Meeting (House Health), Room G-50, Irvis Office Building

HB1877 - 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 Pennsylvania Seal of Biliteracy.

Sponsor

Rep. Joseph D'Orsie (R)

Summary

(PN 2334) Amends the Public School Code, in terms and courses of study, providing for Pennsylvania Seal of Biliteracy. Provides that the Department of Education shall establish criteria for awarding the Pennsylvania Seal of Biliteracy starting with the 2026-2027 school year to any student demonstrating proficiency in English and at least one other foreign language. Establishes qualifications for a student to be eligible for the award. Requires the State Board of Education to issue a report of the efficacy of the seal, rate of completion among graduating students and recommendations on improvements by August 31 of the year following the establishment of criteria and every August 31 thereafter to the chairperson and minority chairperson of the House and Senate Education Committees. Effective immediately.

Intro Date

09/25/2025

Actions

09/23/2025 H - Introduced

09/25/2025 H - Referred to - House Education

Upcoming Events

MONDAY – 09/29/2025

10:00 AM, [House Children & Youth](#)

Voting Meeting, Room 515, Irvis Office Building

To consider: [HR 211](#), [HR 256](#), [HR 298](#) and [HR 299](#)

12:00 PM, Local Governments and School Leaders to Discuss the Budget Impasse

Press Conference, Harrisburg Capitol Complex

TUESDAY – 09/30/2025

10:00 AM, [House Education](#)

Voting Meeting, Room 140, Main Capitol

To consider: [HB 1701](#)

TUESDAY - 10/07/2025

9:30 AM, [House Agriculture & Rural Affairs](#) and [House Education](#)

Joint Public Hearing, Room 515, Irvis Office Building

Joint public hearing on [HB 1768](#) – The Keystone Fresh Act.

1:00 PM, PIEA Scholastic Day at the Capitol

Press Conference, Harrisburg Capitol Complex

WEDNESDAY – 10/08/2025

12:00 PM, PA Local Chambers and Early Learning Providers on Budget Impasse Impact

Press Conference, TBD

THURSDAY – 10/16/2025

10:00 AM, [Independent Regulatory Review Commission \(IRRC\)](#)

Commission Meeting, 14th Fl., Conference Rm., 333 Market St., Harrisburg

Public hearing on the following regulations: No. 3427 Environmental Quality Board #7-584: Corrections to Additional RACT Requirements for Major Sources of Nox and VOCs for the 2015 Ozone NAAQS (RACT 3); No. 3438 State Board of Pharmacy #16A-5430F: Child Abuse Reporting Requirements; No. 3383 Environmental Quality Board #7-577: Triennial Review of Water Quality Standards; No. 3388 Department of Human Services #14-544: Covered Outpatient Drugs; No. 3455 Department of Labor and Industry #12-125: Uniform Construction Code (Final-Omit); No. 3456 Environmental Quality Board #7-590: U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission Consistency Rule Incorporation by Reference (Final-Omit) – [Agenda](#)

In the News

[09/22/2025 - Commonwealth Charter Academy Wins Prestigious Mid-Atlantic Emmy Award](#)

[09/23/2025 - Shapiro Administration Congratulates 13 Schools Selected as 2025 Pennsylvania Blue Ribbon Schools](#)

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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