

Education Recap



Oct. 17 – 23, 2025

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SESSION STATUS

At 5:25 p.m. on Wednesday, October 8, 2025, the House stands adjourned until Monday, October 27, 2025, at 12:00 p.m., unless sooner recalled by the Speaker.

At 12:53 p.m. on Wednesday, October 22, 2025, the Senate recessed until Monday, October 27, 2025, at 1:00 p.m. unless sooner recalled by the President Pro Tempore.

UPCOMING SESSION DAYS

House

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

Senate

Oct. 27-29
Nov. 17-19
Dec. 8-10

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

Press Conferences

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

GOV. SHAPIRO, SECS. CARROLL AND SIGER HIGHLIGHT ERIE “PROGRESS REPORT”

By Julia Walters, Pennsylvania Legislative Services | October 17, 2025

Gov. Josh Shapiro was joined by Secretary of Transportation Mike Carroll and Secretary of Community and Economic Development Rick Siger in Erie today to celebrate economic progress.

Gov. Shapiro thanked Reps. Patrick Harkins (D-Erie), Ryan Bizzarro (D-Erie) and Robert Merski (D-Erie) for their presence and for being “partners in progress.” He highlighted Secs. Carroll and Siger for “investing” their time in the Erie community. Gov. Shapiro recalled announcing the Erie renovation project two years ago to renovate the Bayfront Parkway to connect with downtown. He stated his intention to give a “progress report” on what has been accomplished and additional investments made to “capitalize on this natural beauty and the economic opportunity.” Gov. Shapiro highlighted the construction done to improve safety and the flow of traffic along the Bayfront Parkway, which results in increased accessibility to the waterfront. Gov. Shapiro highlighted noticeable changes such as a new roundabout, the Sassafra Street extension and additional parkway lanes. He mentioned other significant, but less noticeable, progress that has been made, including “moving underground utilities and demolishing old railroad tunnels” to make room for Bayfront Parkway renovations.

Gov. Shapiro said these projects are projected to be completed on time in 2027. “But we are not stopping there,” he added. He mentioned that the Department of Transportation (PennDOT) is currently designing a new pedestrian bridge for Sassafra Street to increase foot traffic and improve connection with the bayfront, which he called “one of Erie’s most incredible assets.” Gov. Shapiro stated his administration is investing in downtown businesses to “revitalize” the area and bring in new businesses. He highlighted the Market House project led by the Erie County Convention Center Authority Board, which is intended to be a “one-stop shop” for visitors to “get a bite to eat, shop from local vendors, and be able to see Erie artist stuff on display.” He continued, “I plan to award Market House a \$9.5 million state commitment in funding that is the remaining balance needed in order to complete this construction.” Gov. Shapiro mentioned his administration has designated Erie as a City Revitalization Improvement Zone (CRIZ). He said this means Pennsylvania “is paying special attention to the needs of Erie, to the economic development goals of this community and to provide targeted support” for community projects. Gov. Shapiro stated this allows Erie to receive sustained and dedicated funding. He highlighted that the Erie County Redevelopment Authority received a grant through the Pennsylvania Strategic Investments to Enhance Sites (PA SITES) program to start planning the McKean Business Park to boost economic activity. Gov. Shapiro emphasized the investments in Erie are important because “Erie is poised to accept more visitors than ever before.” He praised hotel occupancy in Erie, which was up 2% during the first six months of the year. “That is thousands more rooms that have been booked and millions more dollars spent on our economy,” Gov. Shapiro said. He emphasized that visitors spend \$2 billion in the Erie area alone.

Gov. Shapiro expressed his pride at recently being elected to lead the Great Lakes St. Lawrence Governors and Premiers Association (GSGP) “to promote the Great Lakes and to promote commerce between the U.S. and Canada.” Gov. Shapiro noted he is the first Pennsylvania

governor to lead GSGP since former governor Tom Ridge. He expressed his excitement at bringing other GSGP members to Erie for a Great Lakes Conference in 2027. Gov. Shapiro thanked various community leaders and added there were “bright days ahead” for Erie.

Sec. Carroll, PennDOT, thanked the governor, members of his team and the Erie community for their progress on the Bayfront Parkway project. He said the project cost a total of \$162 million, including \$60 million from PennDOT funds directed specifically to Erie for the parkway. Sec. Carroll called it “one of the most significant transportation projects anywhere in our commonwealth.” He mentioned his excitement for Erie residents to experience a smoother flow of traffic along the parkway as well as increased connectivity to the waterfront. Sec. Carroll reiterated the Shapiro administration’s commitment to connecting residents to their communities. “This opportunity and investment in Erie is a perfect example of that commitment across our state,” he said. Sec. Carroll noted the jobs this project has created and “will continue to create” and thanked the construction workers and tradespeople. He praised Gov. Shapiro for investments that create benefits across all Pennsylvania communities. Sec. Carroll highlighted his PennDOT team as well and said he is “proud of all that they’ve done.”

Gov. Shapiro commended Sec. Carroll for his commitment to Erie. He recalled the snowstorm Erie experienced last November and mentioned calling Sec. Carroll for communication. “The secretary was not in his office in Harrisburg,” he said. “He was behind the wheel, driving himself through that storm to here so he could be on the ground with all of you.” Gov. Shapiro thanked Sec. Carroll for his “incredible work.”

Sec. Siger, Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED), stated the Shapiro administration is “laser focused on making our commonwealth an economic powerhouse and increasing our competitiveness.” He commended the work of both public and private sectors coming together and delivering results. Sec. Siger mentioned projects such as the renovation of the Bayfront Parkway will help improve residents’ quality of life. He praised Gov. Shapiro for his Get Stuff Done (GSD) attitude and for continuing to invest in the Erie region. “At DCED, we’re committed to that GSD attitude as well as we work with companies to grow and communities to thrive,” Sec. Siger said.

Roger Richards, governor’s appointee, Erie County Convention Center Authority Board, highlighted his work with the Market House project. “We have been working on that project for over six years, and this is the governor that brought it to its conclusion,” he said. “I’m a great fan of the governor.” Richards said the Market House will be modeled after the Reading Terminal in Philadelphia and called it “a multi-use purpose facility.” He highlighted Erie’s CRIZ designation and thanked Gov. Shapiro for his leadership in securing it. “Over the 30-year life of the CRIZ authority, approximately \$700 million in economic development funds will be available for the city,” Richards explained.

Joe Schember, mayor, City of Erie, highlighted three Erie-based initiatives the governor has led during his tenure in office. He noted the CRIZ and said they will help spur economic growth and create jobs “by collecting state and local taxes generated in the zone and directly investing the revenue to revitalize the 130-acre footprint here in the City of Erie.” Schember then mentioned the \$60 million Bayfront Parkway project and the “millions of dollars for economic and community initiatives” awarded to Erie businesses. He commended the governor for his announcement of an additional \$9.5 million to “get the Bayfront Market House over the finish line.” Schember expressed gratitude toward Gov. Shapiro for his dedication to Erie’s economic development.

Rep. Harkins announced it is a “transformational day for Erie.” He described Erie in the 1980s and said, “No one would even come during the daylight, let alone in the evening.” Rep. Harkins explained how Erie was transformed over the years. He recalled and commended past governors Tom Ridge, Ed Rendell and Tom Wolf for directing investments toward Erie. Rep. Harkins thanked Gov. Shapiro and said, “Truly, this monumental morning is something that we are putting in place for the generations to come.”

T.J. Sandell, president, Great Lakes Building and Construction Trades Council, highlighted that since 2023, the governor has directed \$25.5 billion toward private sector investments across the commonwealth. He stated he was “impressed with the investments in infrastructure, economic development, [and] small business workforce development for the past three years.” Sandell praised the Bayfront Parkway project for creating local jobs and allowing more economic activity throughout the area. He additionally commended the Council’s partnership with the Erie County Convention Center Authority regarding their work on the Market House. “There’s some great there’s some great opportunities coming down the line in the commonwealth,” Sandell said, mentioning the governor’s “push” for a potential data center in Erie. “We’re going to move forward in Erie to make this the best it could possibly be,” Sandell stated.

Gov. Shapiro reiterated the importance of road reconstruction projects and revitalization efforts for buildings and structures. He stated he was “proud” of Pennsylvania for being the “only state with a growing economy” in the northeast. “All of the other economies are either contracting or stable,” he continued. Gov. Shapiro credited the growing economy to the “massive” construction happening across the state.

Can you talk about workforce investments in that budget, and how it is getting limited by this delay?

Gov. Shapiro replied, "The budget that I proposed 255 days ago is chock full of investments for workforce development." He recalled his first activity as governor was to remove the college degree requirement from most state government jobs. Gov. Shapiro emphasized other recent workforce development advancements, such as "doubling" the amount of funding for vocational technical schools and "more apprenticeships than ever before." Gov. Shapiro noted the Senate has only been in session 32 days since he proposed the budget. "By the way, they're paid six figures a year to work full time," Gov. Shapiro added. He thanked the House for passing two "balanced" budgets and mentioned it would give the Erie School District \$163 million. Gov. Shapiro said the Senate Democrats have 23 votes for that budget. "I've got at least three Republican senators who have already told me they would vote yes on that budget to advance it to my desk," he stated. Gov. Shapiro accused Senate Republicans of slowing down the budget process "to try and hurt me politically." He added that "it has not worked" and criticized Senate Republicans for "being disrespectful" toward Pennsylvanians. "I'm not sure what's going on with the Republicans who lead the Senate," Gov. Shapiro said. "If they're unwilling to do it, they should kind of just get out of the way and let the Senate vote."

What can you say about the effect the federal shutdown is having on the state government?

Gov. Shapiro responded that "roughly" 7,800 of Pennsylvania's 8,000 state employees are paid with federal dollars, and it is "unclear" whether those workers will be paid. "There has been a lot of talk about not giving them back pay," he said. Gov. Shapiro added he "just learned this morning" that two million Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) recipients across the state will not receive their benefits. He noted this comes "on the heels of the Congress of the United States voting to knock 510,000 Pennsylvanians off of Medicaid and 140,000 off of SNAP in order to give a tax cut for people who don't need it." Gov. Shapiro said the federal shutdown is "directly" hurting Pennsylvania communities and mentioned his hope that politicians in Washington, D.C. will come together in a bipartisan way to "change their course."

Where specifically is the \$9.5 million in the state commitment coming from for the Marketplace project, and are construction costs affecting the ongoing projects during this state budget impasse?

Sec. Siger stated the \$9.5 million is "a commitment from the governor from the Redevelopment Assistance Capital Project" (RACP).

Sec. Carroll stated the lack of a state budget puts PennDOT in a "very difficult position" regarding the payment of contractors. He mentioned PennDOT will make "difficult decisions" soon because of no state budget finalization.

Gov. Shapiro added, "It doesn't have to be this way." He noted the state's \$11 billion in surplus and reiterated how the House has passed two "bipartisan" budgets. Gov. Shapiro said the Senate's "intransigence" and "unwillingness to come to work" are the reasons for the budget's delay. "It's time for them to come to work and do their jobs," he said.



API PA, FAMILY OF CHRISTIAN HALL CALL FOR 988 PUBLIC AWARENESS LEGISLATION

By Kyle Purchase, Pennsylvania Legislative Services | October 21, 2025

Representatives from the Asian Pacific Islander Political Alliance (API PA) gathered in the Main Capitol Rotunda today to call for the passage of [HB 564](#).

Mohan Seshadri, executive director, API PA, said the press conference was about "two numbers: 988 and 564." He explained the purpose and positive impacts of the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline. He stated, "Health care is only accessible if you know it exists, and far too many people do not know 988, which is a trusted, proven working system." He called on the Senate to pass HB 564, which passed out of the House by a nearly unanimous vote.

Fe Hall, mother of Christian Hall, told the story of her son, who was having a "mental health crisis" and was killed by police on December 30, 2020. She described Christian's personality, which included enjoying food, music and making people laugh. "Instead of receiving compassion and dignity, Christian was met by law enforcement and in the end, he was shot and killed," F. Hall said. She urged for the "right kind" of support, which she says is "connected to trained professionals instead of law enforcement."

Gareth Hall, father of Christian Hall, talked about his experiences as a teacher and his interactions with students who have had similar mental health challenges as his son. "I find myself very scared for my students when I see how they actually try to navigate their feelings," he remarked. He called for HB 564 to be passed and said 988 gives people the option to be connected to "trained

professionals, not cops.” He admitted he and his wife have been asked since Christian’s death if they are “anti-police force.” In response, he said, “We have been very adamant that we are not.”

F. Hall noted it’s been five years since Christian’s death and summarized the advocacy she and her husband have taken to tell his story. She called on Democratic and Republican senators to pass HB 564. “This bill will not bring Christian home, but it will change someone’s life,” she said.

Seshadri reiterated that it has been five years since Christian’s death. “We want to be clear — this is an issue that affects all Pennsylvanians across the commonwealth, regardless of what your ZIP code is, or your background is,” he stated. “It is time that our Senate took up this charge, pass this bill through Health and Human Services, put it on the floor and pass it with bipartisan support.”

Scott Carver, senior pastor, Pleasant Valley Assembly of God Church, discussed his history as a pastor and his interactions with the Hall family. He recalled Christian in his teenage years and explained his role in supporting the Hall family after Christian was killed. He asked, “Is there a way we can get in front of these things instead of ending the way that Christian’s situation ended?” Carver pledged his support for 988 and told another story of a woman who was experiencing a mental health crisis that was near the bridge where Christian was killed. He explained the outcome was different and expressed his gratitude. He commended API PA and the Hall family for their advocacy, “tenacity” to tell their story and “not pointing fingers but saying, we need to do something different so that this doesn’t ever happen again.”

Seshadri said senators would hear from frontline workers who fight against suicide and for mental health care.

Christina Thomas, student, University of Pennsylvania (UPenn), talked about her experiences as a student and mental health. She summarized the efforts she and her community have made to spread awareness and collect signatures in support of HB 564.

Seshadri concluded by citing a few statistics and emphasizing the effectiveness of 988. “The bottom line is this isn’t just morally right, 988 works when that access is provided,” he said.



SENATORS, PSBA LEADERS RECOGNIZE SCHOOL BUS SAFETY WEEK IN CAPITOL

By Julia Walters, Pennsylvania Legislative Services | October 21, 2025

Senators gathered with the Pennsylvania School Bus Association (PSBA) in the East Wing Rotunda on Tuesday morning to inform and educate on National School Bus Safety Week.

Sen. Judy Ward (R-Blair), chair, Senate Transportation Committee, opened the press conference by recognizing National School Bus Safety Week. She reminded that it is illegal in all states to pass a school bus while it is stopped to pick up or drop off students. Sen. Ward noted that “young children are most likely to be in a crash” at a bus stop. She explained that younger children “hurry” off their bus, “act before they think” because of their limited traffic experience and “assume drivers will see them and wait for them to cross the street.” Sen. Ward gave safety tips for parents and students, including arriving early to the bus stop and staying “five giant steps” away from the edge of the road. She noted that school bus drivers transport over one million children to and from school each day in Pennsylvania. “As chair of the Senate Transportation Committee, I urge all Pennsylvania drivers to end the practice of passing a stopped school bus and obey all traffic devices, including school bus stop signs and flashing lights,” Sen. Ward stated. She highlighted “the greatest risk” to school bus safety is other motorists on the road. Sen. Ward explained that when drivers on the road see flashing red and yellow lights from a school bus, it is their cue to slow down and come to a stop rather than rushing through. She reiterated, “What could be more important than stopping for kids?”

Sen. Scott Martin (R-Lancaster), chair, Senate Appropriations Committee, noted 450,000 school bus drivers transport over 23.5 million students to or from school daily. He called it an “awesome” responsibility. “Whether we are parents, U.S. bus drivers, motorists or even lawmakers, we all have a role to play in making sure that every one of these trips is completely safe,” he said. Sen. Martin mentioned upcoming [legislation](#) for a resolution to designate October 20 through 24, 2025, as School Safety Bus Week in Pennsylvania. He noted bus drivers have a responsibility to maintain a safe environment on the bus, perform bus inspections and ensure children can safely enter and exit the bus. Sen. Martin mentioned motorists have a responsibility to come to a complete stop “10 feet away from the buses that have their red lights flashing and stop arm activated and not proceeding until all children have

reached a place of safety.” He recalled past legislative changes the General Assembly has worked to implement to impose stricter penalties for repeat offenders of stopping laws, increase vehicle stopping distances and allow stop arm cameras on school buses. Sen. Martin added it was “truly mortifying” to think about drivers who disobey traffic laws to pass around school buses at a bus stop. He thanked school bus drivers across Pennsylvania for transporting children to and from school daily. “We owe it as Pennsylvania citizens to make sure that those kids are safe,” Sen. Martin stressed.

Sen. Lisa Baker (R-Luzerne), chair, Senate Judiciary Committee, thanked school bus drivers for their “diligent work” in protecting children. She commended PSBA for doing important work to raise awareness and educate on school bus safety. “Last October, 131 violations were reported during Operation Safe Stop,” Sen. Baker said. “That, to me, is an intolerable number of near misses and tragedies waiting to happen.” She added, there is “no excuse” for dangerous driving around school buses while children are getting on or being dropped off. Sen. Baker explained that while the General Assembly has passed more protective measures for school bus safety, she continues to receive reports of motorists “who choose to speed up, speed up rather than slow down.” She continued, “We have determined that strengthening the consequences for risky life-threatening behavior is necessary.” Sen. Baker highlighted [SB 65](#) and described it as a “very strong message” to motorists by “enacting stronger safeguards” as well as additional penalties for those who disobey school bus traffic laws. She thanked PSBA for its support of the bill.

Aaron Sepkowski, president, PSBA, reaffirmed PSBA’s “collective commitment” to children’s safety. “These students represent the future, and we owe them the safest possible start and end of their school day,” he said. Sepkowski emphasized that school buses are “70 times safer” than any other vehicle on the road. He attributed this to the “rigorous” safety and maintenance standards that school buses undergo. Sepkowski commended school bus drivers for their professionalism and for maintaining a “strong culture of accountability.” He mentioned “far too many” drivers pass school buses while actively picking up or dropping off students. Sepkowski encouraged lawmakers and school districts to continue promoting safety enforcement and public education, and to invest in new technologies to prevent tragedies. He thanked school bus drivers for being “true professionals” while driving in “all kinds of weather.” Sepkowski encouraged parents to speak with their children about school bus safety. He noted that while National School Bus Safety Week is important, PSBA has a commitment “all year” to focus on student safety. “Thank you, and have a safe, meaningful National School Bus Safety Week,” he finished.

David Schrantz, vice president, PSBA, stated he still “gets behind the wheel” of a school bus regularly and mentioned it keeps him “connected to what this work is really about.” He explained how seriously he takes the responsibility of transporting children to and from school. “We all take that responsibility to heart,” Schrantz said. He mentioned his pride in school bus drivers across Pennsylvania for making “safety their mission.” Schrantz reiterated the role Pennsylvania residents play in keeping children and communities safe.

Sen. Ward thanked everyone for attending before she closed the press conference.



Committee News

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

Senate Education Committee

10/21/2025, 10:00 a.m., Hearing Room 1, North Office Building

Pennsylvania Legislative Services

The committee held a public hearing on cell phone use policies in schools.

Chairman Lynda Schlegel Culver (R-Northumberland) highlighted the importance of cell phone use policies in schools. She noted proposed legislation, [SB 229](#) and [SB 1014](#), and discussed the debate between state-mandated policies and local decision-making. She expressed interest in exploring all sides of the debate with the involvement of various stakeholders and the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL).

Minority Chairman Lindsey Williams (D-Allegheny) expressed eagerness to hear from educators, stakeholders, parents and students about cell phone policies in schools. She emphasized the importance of centering student experiences in the digital age and looked forward to learning about balanced approaches that promote learning and well-being.

Dr. Michael Vuckovich, superintendent, Windber School District, discussed the negative impact of excessive cell phone use by students on learning, social development and mental health. He advocated for a statewide policy with local flexibility. He emphasized the importance of a balanced approach that includes digital literacy and mental health initiatives.

Raymond Omer, superintendent, West Middlesex Area School District and Reynolds School District, shared his experiences with cell phone policies in two rural school districts in Mercer County. He emphasized the importance of local control. He described a successful student-led initiative to ban cell phones in Reynolds and a less strict policy in West Middlesex, highlighting the positive outcomes of these policies.

Laura Morton, director of policy services, Pennsylvania School Boards Association (PSBA), testified on the distractions caused by electronic devices in schools. She detailed PSBA's development of a policy guide. She noted that around 425 school districts in the commonwealth have already adopted electronic device policies that provide exemptions for students who require devices due to individualized education plans (IEPs) or a 504-service agreement. She emphasized the importance of local autonomy in creating cell phone policies and advocated for legislation that provides clear guidance and flexibility.

Aaron Chapin, president, Pennsylvania State Education Association (PSEA), discussed the mental health crisis among youth linked to mobile devices and expressed support for SB 1014. He emphasized the need for policies to cover all mobile devices. He explained that decisions on specific policies should be made by individual school entities with input from students, parents and school employees. He advocated for limited exceptions to the restrictions. He thanked the committee for allowing PSEA to be a part of the conversation.

Chairman Culver asked if Morton could quantify how many schools have a "bell-to-bell," full-day restriction versus a "just during class time" policy. Morton apologized for not being able to provide specific numbers on schools with mobile device restrictions, citing uncertainty around the data. Chairman Culver asked Vuckovich about any concerns from students or parents regarding cell phone policy development. Vuckovich shared that his school district has diverse opinions on cell phone policies, with restrictions in place for elementary and middle schools and limited use allowed in high schools. He emphasized the importance of family engagement in these discussions. Chairman Culver asked Chapin about the PSEA's stance on cell phone access for teachers. Chapin stated that the focus should be on students, and cell phone regulations for teachers should be determined by school administration. Chairman Culver highlighted the potential issue of teachers pulling out their phones for use in the middle of class. Chapin noted that, "there are times when cell phones are needed for teachers to communicate with administration." Chairman Culver thanked Omer for answering one of her questions about the parental, student and teacher response to cell phone restrictions.

Chairman Williams inquired about PSBA's policy guides in relation to SB 1014, which mandates school board policies to restrict cell phone possession. Morton explained that PSBA aims to comply with laws while allowing for local discretion in policy specifics. Chairman Williams emphasized the importance of not mandating schools to take possession of cell phones and the value of local decision-making in policy development. She expressed concern over companies profiting from selling storage solutions for phones. Chairman Williams asked Vuckovich about developing developmentally appropriate and equitable cell phone policies, highlighting concerns over increased suspensions for black students following a cell phone ban in Florida. Vuckovich advocated for a cautious approach to policy changes, noting mental health concerns. He emphasized the importance of engaging with students and families, as well as teaching students effective cell phone use within a structured framework. Chairman Williams explained the need to ensure all exceptions are considered for students and emphasized the importance of local school authority.

Sen. Devlin Robinson (R-Allegheny), prime sponsor of SB 1014, asked Morton why approximately 425 Pennsylvania school districts decided to adopt an electronic device policy. Morton explained that the policy guide recommended such policies primarily for legal liability reasons and required annual notifications to parents and students but could not give a definitive answer to why they were implemented. Sen. Robinson then asked if feedback had been received on the effectiveness of these policies and whether they made teaching easier. Morton said she did not have the information but would try to get back to the committee with it. Sen. Robinson highlighted that the widespread adoption of electronic device policies by 425 out of 500 school districts in Pennsylvania underscores the need for the legislation, which aims to address the issue with governmental oversight. He asked Chapin if he supports a full ban on cell phone use during the school day. Chapin stated that the PSEA supports a “bell-to-bell” policy for cell phone use in schools, with exceptions for students with specific needs, emphasizing the importance of this policy for improving students' lives. Sen. Robinson asked Chapin about the inclusion of school districts with different policies on cell phone use in his organization. Chapin emphasized the need for consistency and a statewide “bell-to-bell” policy with clear consequences for violations. Sen. Robinson shared an anecdote from a trip to Ireland about the effectiveness of banning cell phones in schools.

Sen. Anthony Williams (D-Philadelphia) expressed concerns about attributing anxiety and depression solely to cell phone use. He emphasized the need for uniform standards, considering students who rely on cell phones for educational access.

Sen. Dave Argall (R-Schuylkill) recalled his visit to Panther Valley schools, where cell phone use was a frequent topic. He expressed his agreement with taking stronger action on this issue, inquiring why a more comprehensive approach is being advocated for now. Chapin highlighted the increased reliance on cell phones by students since returning from the COVID pandemic. He detailed a school safety task force created by PSCA, which discussed cell phone use as one of the main factors contributing to a lack of school safety. He emphasized the importance of a “bell-to-bell” policy to increase socialization in school and decrease chances of cheating in the classroom. Sen. Argall reflected on his teaching experience, comparing state governments to “laboratories of democracy” and suggesting this concept could apply to schools as well.

Sen. Steven Santarsiero (D-Bucks), a co-sponsor of SB 1014, discussed the importance of balancing state policy and local control regarding school cell phone policies. He shared a personal experience to highlight the potential negative impact of cell phones in schools. He expressed openness to further dialogue on the legislation.

Sen. Carolyn Comitta (D-Chester) emphasized the importance of involving all stakeholders in crafting cell phone use policies in schools. She advocated for a democratic process that empowers students and reflects the specific needs of schools. She asked for the testifiers' thoughts on the role of students and parents in making a decision on cell phone policies in schools. Vuckovich shared his experience with engaging Parent and Student Advisory Councils on cell phone policy, emphasizing adaptability and the ongoing nature of the conversation around cell phone use in schools. Chapin highlighted the importance of SB 1014 for providing structure and allowing for local community buy-in. He stressed the value of community collaboration and the necessity of taking action to avoid future regrets. Omer discussed the contrasting cell phone policies between Reynolds and West Middlesex elementary schools, emphasizing local decision-making and the positive impact of involving students in the policy-making process. He questioned the necessity of a statewide policy given the success of local solutions.

Sen. Williams expressed concerns about assumptions regarding students' desires for technology. He emphasized the need for a comprehensive conversation about the impact of cell phone use on various student populations and advocated for a balanced approach.

Atticus Mitchell, 10th-grade student, Danville Area School District, shared his positive experiences with his school's cell phone policy, which allows limited use. He emphasized the importance of trust and responsible cell phone use. He highlighted the psychological impacts of phone usage and called for more support for extracurricular activities and better utilization of school libraries. He noted the challenge of having only one librarian for multiple schools. He highlighted the need for educators, elected officials and adults to provide the best opportunities for students to grow in a world being developed alongside technology.

Camryn Hoover, 12th-grade student, Milton Area School District, spoke against banning cell phones in schools, advocating for policies that use cell phones as teachable moments and emphasize mutual trust. She described her school's policy, which restricts cell phone use during instructional time and includes a three-step disciplinary process for misuse. She stated this policy has been empowering for teachers and respectful of students' abilities to manage their cell phone use responsibly.

Dr. Ashley Loboda, a pediatrician and parent, Allegheny County, expressed strong support for a bell-to-bell cell phone policy in Pennsylvania public schools, emphasizing it as a crucial public health initiative. She criticized the distractions and social pressures caused by cell phones, including their negative impact on academic performance and privacy. She argued that using technology during lunch as a reward exacerbates the issue. She highlighted the challenges of combating the addictive nature of social media and technology, urging for a bell-to-bell policy to minimize distractions and improve educational outcomes. She cited studies showing the majority of cell phone use in schools is non-academic and exposes teens to inappropriate content. She argued such policies could lead to more engaged learning and reduced anxiety among students. She detailed her support for a consistent statewide cell

phone policy to protect children's education and mental health. She discussed the negative impacts of smartphones on children, including increased anxiety, depression and suicidality. She referenced a report showing significant parental support for cell phone restrictions in schools and argued for a bell-to-bell policy to ensure educational access and reduce peer pressure.

Chairman Culver asked Mitchell about students' anxiety related to not having access to their phones and whether it leads to sneaky phone use during the day. Mitchell stated that he has not observed sneaky phone use in class. He noted that students may sometimes check if a parent contacts them but often comply immediately when instructed to put their devices away, showing no resistance or disrespect towards the teacher's authority. Chairman Culver asked whether students feel compelled to use their phones during allowed times or if they prefer to engage in conversation instead. Hoover stated that students occasionally use their phones during lunch and in the hallway but still engage in regular conversations with their friends during this time. Chairman Culver asked about the impact of school policies on students' phone usage outside of school hours. Mitchell explained that the school's phone policy has encouraged him to limit his phone use outside of school during activities that require focus, mirroring his classroom behavior. Hoover added that her limited phone use is more due to her involvement in theater and other extracurriculars than school policy, although she uses her phone during her free time. Chairman Culver inquired what students should know about cell phone use. Hoover mentioned that students should recognize that authorities have their best interests in mind when looking to implement cell phone usage policies in school. Mitchell emphasized the importance of students understanding that the government values their input and works for them, not against them. Chairman Culver asked at what age children should receive a cell phone. Mitchell shared that he got his first phone at age 10 with restrictions, advocating for introducing phones on a "parent to parent basis" around that age or the beginning of middle school, with limitations. Hoover said she received her phone at age 12 for sports-related coordination, suggesting middle school as an appropriate time for kids to have cell phones, with high school being more about fitting in. Chairman Culver posed the same question about the appropriate age for cell phone usage to Loboda. Loboda recommended delaying cell phone use until high school for safety reasons. She shared the experience with her children using a home cell phone for necessary communication in middle school without social media access. She highlighted the challenges of social media and peer pressure in high school. Chairman Culver asked if these conversations were had on a regular basis with her patients and their parents. Loboda also confirmed that she discusses cell phone usage, social media and responsible usage strategies with her patients and their families in her practice. She stressed the importance of parental guidance and the influence of adult behavior on children's approach to screen use.

Chairman Williams discussed the importance of funding for school libraries and the need for more librarians. She noted the challenges of cell phone and social media addiction and the negative impact of social media algorithms on teenage girls' self-esteem. She expressed concerns about banning phones in schools entirely and asked for input on the most important aspects of students' cell phone and social media use to consider. Mitchell discussed the importance of communication between students, administrators and elected officials regarding cell phone and social media use in schools. He recognized the need for trust, treating students as young adults and clear communication about phone policies. Hoover highlighted that many students, including herself, try to limit their phone use, especially during challenging classes. She advocated for the freedom to demonstrate responsibility.

Sen. Robinson asked about the average screen time of the students. Mitchell responded that his screen time was about five hours daily, mostly for schoolwork. Hoover said her screen time was about an hour during school and three or more hours outside of school for communication with friends and family. Sen. Robinson compared Mitchell's screen time to a full workday and shared his own average screen time of one hour and 33 minutes per day. He discussed the negative impact of excessive cell phone use on social skills needed for the workforce and asked Hoover about her phone use during extracurricular activities. Hoover admitted to using her phone during theater practice and basketball breaks. She explained that her phone use during school was for educational purposes, such as checking emails and applying for scholarships. Mitchell explained that a significant portion of his phone use was for phone calls related to study purposes and extracurricular activities. He noted limitations with his school-issued Chromebook to complete certain extracurricular or school-related assignments. He highlighted using his phone for educational purposes, such as applying to a dual enrollment college program. Sen. Robinson inquired if the speakers had tried spending a weekend without their phones. Hoover recalled doing it a long time ago, but more recently shared her experience of deleting Instagram for a period of time to take a break from it. Mitchell talked about frequently disconnecting from digital devices to focus on non-digital activities and interests. Sen. Robinson asked Loboda about their research on the effects of social media and phone alerts on the brain. Loboda responded that she hasn't personally conducted such studies but is aware of research showing dopamine release from these interactions. Sen. Robinson asked if the behavior described could be related to a dopamine rush from another substance. Loboda discussed the addictive nature of the dopamine rush from cell phone use, including educational games, and how it could train children's brains in a problematic way. She explained that adults are similarly affected and that there is scientific data supporting these observations.

Sen. Comitta discussed her personal use of digital technology. She proposed a pilot program involving students, parents and teachers to explore and evaluate policies on technology use, suggesting a review and modification process. She asked for the students' thoughts on this potential program. Hoover expressed support for the pilot program idea, noting that stricter rules at their school received positive feedback from teachers. Sen. Comitta inquired whether a new policy with input from students, parents and teachers would gain more acceptance if implemented temporarily. Hoover detailed that a policy allowing student feedback would

be more appealing. Mitchell emphasized the benefits of a flexible policy that allows for evaluation and adjustments based on student feedback. Sen. Comitta discussed the anxiety associated with cell phone and social media use, asking for opinions on the trend of switching from smartphones to flip phones. Hoover expressed skepticism about the “coolness” of flip phones but acknowledged the trend of taking breaks from social media. Mitchell noted a growing awareness among students about the benefits of limiting social media use. He highlighted companies developing phones that mimic flip phones. Sen. Comitta thanked the students for their remarks and stated she would ask Loboda a question after the hearing concludes due to time constraints.

Sen. Santarsiero thanked the speakers and discussed the societal issue of technology use, mentioning his own effort to be mindful about phone use.

Sen. Comitta emphasized the significant difference in cell phone use and addiction between adults and children, noting the impact on brain development and social-emotional growth. She highlighted that the brain doesn't fully mature until age 26, which affects risk assessment capabilities. She referenced “The Anxious Generation” by Jonathan Haidt, discussing appropriate ages for children's exposure to cell phones and social media. She agreed with Loboda's suggestion of introducing cell phones around age 13 and social media at age 16, stressing the importance of considering these factors in policy-making.

Lauren Gendill, policy analyst, NCSL, discussed the state policy landscape regarding cell phone use in schools between 2023 and 2025. She detailed that 36 states and the District of Columbia (D.C.) enacted legislation related to this issue, with 32 states and D.C. establishing requirements for local policies on student cell phone use. She highlighted the diversity in state provisions regarding cell phone use, including guidance, incentives and requirements that inform local policy development and review.

Chairman Culver asked Gendill for more details on the provisions regarding guidelines and criteria for parent-student communication and emergency protocols. Gendill explained that some states have specific provisions for emergency communications in school cell phone policies, citing examples from Iowa, Arizona and Georgia. Chairman Culver asked whether any states have rescinded or modified their original policies regarding emergency communication in schools since 2023. Gendill stated that Ohio and Florida have amended their policies. She detailed that Ohio changed from restricting to prohibiting cell phone use and Florida prohibited use by elementary and middle school students during the school day, with separate provisions for high school students.

Chairman Williams expressed concern about the challenges of measuring the outcomes of cell phone policies in schools, especially with the widespread use of school-issued devices. She asked how other states are assessing the impact of their legislation. Gendill explained that Florida requires a report on the policy's impact on student achievement and behavior. She noted that Delaware's report focuses on survey data related to cell phone policy. She highlighted that states like Maryland and Kansas have formed commissions or working groups to evaluate cell phone policies. She stated she could follow up and provide more resources and related data on these measures. Chairman Williams said she would appreciate more resources. She detailed that she was looking forward to having more conversations on this issue to incorporate all perspectives, emphasizing today as a “great beginning.”

Chairman Culver noted the value of the testimony provided at the hearing for future guidance for legislators and school officials on this issue.



Senate Rules and Executive Nominations Committee
10/21/2025, 1:30 p.m., Rules Committee Conference Room
By Dominic Kenny, Pennsylvania Legislative Services

The committee met to consider executive nominations and several bills.

[SB 246](#) – (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). The bill was unanimously **reported as committed**.

[SB 6](#) – (PN 434) The Permit Administration and Economic Development Act provides for the administration of permits by State agencies, for a tracking system for permit applications, for the establishment of permit programs, for third-party review of permit decision delays and for annual reports; establishes the Pennsylvania Office of Transformation and Opportunity and the Economic Development Strategy Group; and provides for their powers and duties. Provides definitions. Requires that no later than 60 days after the effective date of the act, the state agencies must review the permit decisions and delays during the immediately preceding calendar year and submit a report. Outlines the list of permits required for publication and adds a time requirement of no later than 90 days for the completion of the initial list. Requires agencies to establish and maintain a publicly available tracking system for permit applications and outlines notice and system content requirements. Establishes notice of incomplete and technically deficient application requirements. Outlines the time limit and the tolling period. Establishes notice of permit changes and expiration requirements and provides for the validity of permits. Requires state agencies to establish a program to review permit decision delays and resolve issues causing permit decision delays and allows for third-party contracts. Outlines the review, issuance and approval process. Establishes annual reporting requirements and outlines the content. Establishes the Pennsylvania Office of Transformation and Opportunity to facilitate the implementation of transformational economic development projects. Provides for the duties of the office including creating a systematic process to monitor the progress of economic development projects, establishing and monitoring the progress of additional projects, working in partnership with the department, establishing objectives and targets, establishing and monitoring time-based standards, working in partnership with the department and all relevant State agencies, Outlines the staffing and administration requirements and establishes reporting requirements. Establishes the Economic Development Strategy Group within the Governor’s Office. Outlines membership criteria and prohibits compensation of members. Effective in 60 days. The bill was **reported as amended**, along a party-line vote, with Democrats voting in the negative.

[A01953](#), by Pittman, updates the 2025 deadline for the initial annual report. The amendment was **adopted**, along a party-line vote, with Democrats voting in the negative.

[SB 160](#) – (PN 1225) The General Appropriation Act of 2025 provides appropriations from the General Fund for the expenses of the Executive, Legislative and Judicial Departments of the Commonwealth, the public debt and the public schools for the fiscal year July 1, 2025, to June 30, 2026, and for the payment of bills incurred and remaining unpaid at the close of the fiscal year ending June 30, 2025; to provide appropriations from special funds and accounts to the Executive and Judicial Departments for the fiscal year July 1, 2025, to June 30, 2026, and for the payment of bills remaining unpaid at the close of the fiscal year ending June 30, 2025; to provide for the appropriation of Federal funds to the Executive and Judicial Departments for the fiscal year July 1, 2025, to June 30, 2026, and for the payment of bills remaining unpaid at the close of the fiscal year ending June 30, 2025; and to provide for the additional appropriation of Federal and State funds to the Executive and Legislative Departments for the fiscal year July 1, 2024, to June 30, 2025, and for the payment of bills incurred and remaining unpaid at the close of the fiscal year ending June 30, 2024. Revises appropriation amounts throughout the act. Applies act retroactively to July 1, 2025. Effective immediately. (Prior PN: 529). The bill was **reported as amended**, along a party-line vote, with Democrats voting in the negative.

[A01937](#), by Pittman, increases appropriations for debt services and school employees’ pensions, and reduces the legislature’s operating expenses. The amendment was **adopted**, along a party-line vote, with Democrats voting in the negative.

Chairman Joe Pittman (R-Indiana) offered a motion to revert SB 160 to prior PN 529. The motion was **adopted**, along a party-line vote, with Democrats voting in the negative.

Minority Chairman Jay Costa (D-Allegheny) offered a motion to table Chairman Pittman's motion so that further budget negotiations could take place. The motion **failed**, along a party-line vote, with Republicans voting in the negative.

Chairman Costa offered a motion to table A01937. The motion **failed**, along a party-line vote, with Republicans voting in the negative.

On the motion to revert, Chairman Costa urged the committee not to revert SB 160 to its prior printer number. He noted that passing the original version of the bill would remove funds for childcare, education, violence prevention, student loan assistance and food accessibility. He insisted on tabling the motion so leadership from both parties could negotiate a more agreeable version of the bill. He pointed out that the budget is over 100 days overdue.

On A01937, Chairman Costa argued that the proposed amendment was not cost-neutral and went against Senate policy.

Sen. Steve Santarsiero (D-Bucks) said the amendment would turn SB 160 into a "flat-funding budget." He said he could not support the bill in its current form.

Chairman Costa noted that the House passed a \$50.2 billion budget, arguing that the Senate should be more proactive in negotiations.

Certain [recalls](#) were unanimously **reported** to the floor.

Certain [executive nominations](#) were unanimously **reported** to the floor.



House Judiciary Committee

10/22/2025, 10:00 a.m., Room 140, Main Capitol

Pennsylvania Legislative Services

The committee held a public hearing on House Bill 1957.

[HB 1957](#) - (PN 2468) Joint Resolution proposing an amendment to the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, providing for personal reproductive liberty. Adds that every individual has the fundamental right to exercise personal reproductive liberty and make and effectuate decisions regarding the individual's own reproduction. Prohibits the commonwealth from denying, burdening, infringing upon or abridging this right unless justified by a compelling state interest achieved by the least restrictive means. Constitutional amendments require approval in two consecutive legislative sessions and then approval by the voters through a referendum.

Chairman Tim Briggs (D-Montgomery) opened the public hearing on HB 1957, explaining that the bill is a proposed constitutional amendment to enshrine the right to personal reproductive liberty in the Pennsylvania Constitution. He added that the hearing satisfies House rules requiring a public hearing for all proposed constitutional amendments, and that written testimony will continue to be accepted for inclusion in the official record.

Minority Chairman Rob Kauffman (R-Franklin) expressed surprise at the sudden scheduling of the hearing on HB 1957 during a non-session week, noting that the committee had not expected to conduct further business until the following week. He questioned the urgency of considering the constitutional amendment, suggesting that it was not driven by any decline in abortion access in Pennsylvania, as the number of abortions continues to rise annually. He speculated that the timing might be politically motivated, possibly to divert attention from the ongoing state budget impasse or the upcoming November elections. He noted that, despite the short notice, the Republican members have made an effort to attend.

[Megan Orbich, impacted mother](#), testified in support of HB 1957 by sharing her personal experience with a complicated pregnancy. She recounted that after a miscarriage, she became pregnant again and learned through testing that her baby had a severe congenital heart defect. She said that despite the diagnosis, she and her husband chose to continue the pregnancy, believing their son could have a meaningful life. She continued that following his birth, her son endured multiple surgeries, long hospitalizations and continuous medical interventions, spending nearly his entire first year in intensive care. She emphasized that while she does not regret her decision, it was an agonizing, deeply personal choice made between her and her doctors, one that should remain

protected by law. She warned that restricting reproductive rights would lead to greater suffering for families and children facing fatal or severe medical conditions. She urged lawmakers to advance HB 1957 to allow voters to decide on protecting reproductive freedom in Pennsylvania, affirming that such decisions must remain between patients and their health care providers.

Dr. E. Goldblatt Hyatt, DSW program director, associate professor of professional practice for reproductive justice, associate professor, Robert Wood Johnson Medical School, testified in support of HB 1957 by sharing the story of their pregnancy and the diagnosis of their son, who was found at 20 weeks to have a rare and fatal condition called congenital high airway obstruction syndrome (CHAOS). They described the shock of learning that their baby would never develop an airway and that his condition would lead to heart failure and certain death. They said that doctors informed them that continuing the pregnancy would risk their own health and result in the delivery of a nonviable baby who would not be conscious or able to breathe. They continued that after consulting with medical professionals, family and their spiritual community, they and their husband made the painful decision to end the pregnancy. They emphasized that it was a deeply personal and loving choice, made to spare their child from suffering, and one that was only possible because abortion care is legal and accessible in Pennsylvania. They explained that such cases make up about 1% of all pregnancies and are never decided lightly. They warned that restrictive abortion laws elsewhere have forced parents into unimaginable situations, sometimes leading to unsafe or coerced outcomes. They urged lawmakers to protect reproductive choice as a matter of compassion, autonomy and human dignity, stating that every parent deserves the ability to make private medical decisions for themselves and their families.

Laura Hernández, senior policy associate of reproductive rights, State Innovation Exchange (SiX), emphasized the importance of codifying reproductive freedom in Pennsylvania's constitution. She explained that SiX empowers state legislators to advance policies that promote reproductive health, rights and justice, including through their Reproductive Freedom Policy Network of nearly 700 state leaders. She highlighted that this amendment would establish a fundamental right for Pennsylvanians to make independent decisions regarding pregnancy care, abortion, contraception and fertility care. She cited recent state ballot initiatives following the Supreme Court's 2022 overturning of *Roe v. Wade*, noting that voters in multiple states, including California, Kansas, Michigan, Ohio, Arizona, Colorado, Maryland, Missouri, Montana, Nevada and New York, affirmed access to reproductive health care. She stressed that access to contraception and fertility care is particularly important for historically marginalized communities, LGBTQ+ individuals, cancer patients and people with disabilities. She cited data showing gaps in access, including contraceptive deserts in Pennsylvania affecting over 752,000 women. She highlighted public support for fertility treatments such as in vitro fertilization (IVF). She argued that the amendment is necessary to ensure safe, legal and accessible reproductive health care in the state, restore public trust and affirm bodily autonomy. She added that by passing the amendment, Pennsylvania would join more than a dozen states that have constitutionally guaranteed reproductive rights, protecting access to abortion, contraception and fertility care for all residents.

Elizabeth Kirk, JD, assistant professor of Law, co-director, Center for Law and the Human Person, Catholic University of America, Columbus School of Law, emphasized concerns about the proposed constitutional amendment's impact on Pennsylvania law and legislative authority. She explained that the amendment, by enshrining a broad right to "reproductive liberty" for "individuals," would likely invalidate existing abortion regulations and make future legislation difficult or impossible to enforce. She noted that the amendment's language is vague, leaving questions about who qualifies as an "individual" and potentially extending protections to minors, which could weaken parental rights and protections against reproductive coercion. She stressed that the amendment incorporates a strict scrutiny standard, a legal framework so rigorous that it has historically led courts to strike down most challenged laws. She added that, unlike *Roe v. Wade* or *Planned Parenthood v. Casey*, the amendment lacks a viability framework, meaning abortion restrictions could be challenged at any stage of pregnancy, including post-viability. She further raised concerns about the amendment's non-discrimination clause, arguing it could obligate taxpayers to fund all services deemed protected under reproductive liberty, not just abortion, based on precedents from other states. She warned that the amendment would limit the legislature's ability to regulate reproductive health, potentially allow minors to make reproductive decisions without parental involvement and expand taxpayer obligations. She urged legislators to carefully consider these predictable legal consequences and recommended reviewing her full written testimony for a detailed analysis.

Dr. Sarah Gutman, obstetrics and gynecology, University of Pennsylvania, Penn Medicine, explained that the amendment would safeguard personal reproductive liberty for Pennsylvanians and allow patients to make deeply personal decisions about pregnancy, including whether to continue or end a pregnancy. She described the range of care she provides, including preventive care, contraceptive counseling, prenatal care, deliveries and abortion services. She emphasized that timely access to these services allows her to care for patients facing difficult or unexpected circumstances, such as serious fetal diagnoses. She highlighted the positive outcomes she has witnessed when patients have access to abortion care. She stressed that protecting reproductive liberty is essential to addressing social and racial disparities in maternal health, noting that abortion restrictions disproportionately affect Black, Indigenous, LGBTQ and low-income individuals. She added that Pennsylvania's maternal mortality rate is twice as high among Black birthing people. She shared a personal perspective as a mother, expressing her hope that future generations in Pennsylvania will retain autonomy over their reproductive lives. She stressed that HB 1957 is critical to protecting reproductive rights now and for generations to come.

Rep. Joe Kerwin (R-Dauphin) referenced Kirk's testimony on the proposed constitutional amendment in HB 1957. He noted that Kirk had suggested that parental notification requirements and other "commonsense safeguards surrounding abortion would likely fail the strict scrutiny standard of review enacted by this proposed constitutional amendment." He asked whether the proposed amendment provides any explicit protections for the rights of parents to guide their minor children's medical decisions. Kirk responded that the text of the proposed amendment protects "individuals," a term that is undefined. She explained that other states facing similar interpretive questions have often included minors within that definition. She stated that while the Supreme Court has recognized that minors have constitutional rights, including the right to abortion, those rights are not coextensive with adults' rights and historically allowed for parental involvement via mechanisms like judicial bypass. She cited examples, such as Florida, where minors' abortion rights under strict scrutiny statutes were found to override parental rights.

Rep. Stephanie Borowicz (R-Clinton) thanked Orbich for her decision to continue her pregnancy. She challenged Hyatt's experience, asserting that their child was "meant for this world" and "worthy of life." Rep. Borowicz criticized Hyatt's use of the term "birthing person." She thanked Kirk "for speaking the truth." She disputed Gutman's characterization of abortion as medical care, describing it instead as "killing a human life" and underscoring the unique DNA and individuality of each fetus. She directed a question to Kirk, asking whether the proposed constitutional amendment would permit on-demand abortion throughout all nine months of pregnancy. Kirk responded that under the proposed constitutional amendment, the predictable legal outcome would likely allow unrestricted abortion throughout the entire pregnancy. She noted that Pennsylvania's current 24-week gestational limit would be vulnerable under the amendment because it imposes a very high legal standard without any built-in limiting factors, such as viability or other restrictions on abortion access. Rep. Borowicz referenced model representations of fetuses at 20 and 28 weeks to illustrate stages of fetal development. She highlighted that Pennsylvania currently allows abortion up to four weeks past 20 weeks and reflected on the broader context of over 50 years and 63 million abortions in the United States.

Orbich reflected on her experiences raising a child with serious medical needs, emphasizing that she has no regrets about the decisions she made during pregnancy and after birth. She acknowledged the guidance of a cousin, who advised making choices without looking back with regret and explained that her love for her son sometimes makes her feel selfish, given the suffering he endures. She described the intensity of his medical struggles, including 14 months of life-threatening challenges and sedation for routine care, while emphasizing that he is now thriving, albeit with a tenuous health situation. She noted that those who have not personally experienced such circumstances cannot fully understand the complexity of these decisions.

Hyatt emphasized that people in Pennsylvania are actively making reproductive decisions that affect their own lives. They stressed that to ignore or discount these individuals would be dismissive of members of the commonwealth and their autonomy.

Rep. Tim Bonner (R-Mercer) directed a question to Kirk, asking whether she was aware of any legislation or state constitutional provisions in the United States that provide even more expansive or "extreme" protections for abortion than those being proposed in Pennsylvania. Kirk responded that while other states have adopted amendments incorporating strict scrutiny for abortion, most of those states still include frameworks or guardrails, such as ensuring informed consent or allowing some state regulation. She explained that Pennsylvania would be an outlier with this proposed amendment, providing "extreme" protections for abortion. Rep. Bonner reiterated that the provisions in the bill would be more extreme than those in other states. Kirk emphasized that the proposed amendment's protections are broad, extending beyond abortion to include all reproductive-related services, such as sterilization, gender-affirming procedures and related medical interventions. She described it as "the most extreme protection for those bundle of activities."

Chairman Kauffman thanked testifiers, noting that his questions had been mostly answered by Kirk. He added that for the sake of time, he will defer his questions to a later discussion.

Chairman Briggs thanked the staff, committee members and all testifiers for their participation. He expressed appreciation for the respectful and insightful dialogue and officially adjourned the hearing. He noted a brief pause before the voting meeting and invited testifiers to stay if they wished to observe the remainder of the agenda.



Bullet.in.Points

[STATE BOARD OF OPTOMETRY: RULEMAKING; CONTINUING EDUCATION](#)

The State Board of Optometry proposed an amendment relating to acceptable methods of continuing education. Additional information is available on the Pennsylvania Bulletin.

Cosponsor Memos

HCO2800 - Improving Access to Healthcare via International Medical Doctors

Sponsor

Rep. Danilo Burgos (D)

Summary

Authorizes the State Board of Medicine to issue provisional licenses (valid for up to four years) to international medical graduates (IMGs) who meet rigorous standards.

Intro Date

10/20/2025

Last Action

10/20/2025 H - Cosponsor memo filed

HCO2802 - Continuing Medical Education in Nutrition

Sponsor

Rep. Paul Takac (D)

Summary

Requires physicians in Pennsylvania to take one hour of continuing medical education (CME) in nutrition each two-year licensing period.

Intro Date

10/20/2025

Last Action

10/22/2025 H - Introduced HB1980

HCO2807 - Interstate Compact for School Psychologists

Sponsor

Rep. Manuel Guzman (D)

Summary

Aims for Pennsylvania to join the Interstate Compact for School Psychologists.

Intro Date

10/21/2025

Last Action

10/21/2025 H - Cosponsor memo filed

HCO2808 - Expanding Access to State Grants for Incarcerated Students**Sponsor**

Rep. Johanny Cepeda-Freytiz (D)

Summary

Allows incarcerated students to apply for Pennsylvania State Grants if they are within five years of their scheduled release and enrolled in an approved prison education program.

Intro Date

10/22/2025

Last Action

10/22/2025 H - Cosponsor memo filed

HCO2813 - Reconciliation Budget**Sponsor**

Rep. Seth M. Grove (R)

Summary

Aims to develop a reconciliation budget.

Intro Date

10/23/2025

Last Action

10/23/2025 H - Cosponsor memo filed

SCO1370 - Upholding Students' Civil Rights in Education**Sponsor**

Sen. Lindsey Marie Williams (D)

Summary

Creates a new Office of Civil Rights within the Pennsylvania Department of Education and authorize the state to investigate and enforce federal civil rights in the absence of a federal government willing to do so.

Intro Date

10/17/2025

Last Action

10/17/2025 S - Cosponsor memo filed

SCO1377 - The Student Choice & Access Act**Sponsor**

Sen. Doug Mastriano (R)

Summary

Bans vaccine mandates at colleges and universities across Pennsylvania.

Intro Date

10/21/2025

Last Action

10/21/2025 S - Cosponsor memo filed

Basic Ed Bill Actions

HB564 - An Act amending Title 35 (Health and Safety) of the Pennsylvania Consolidated Statutes, providing for mental health crisis response; and imposing duties on the Department of Human Services.**Sponsor**

Rep. Tarah Probst (D)

Summary

(PN 1831) Amends Title 35 (Health and Safety), adding a chapter to provide for mental health crisis response; and imposing duties on the Department of Human Services (DHS). Provides definitions. Directs DHS to implement a campaign, subject to available funding, to promote awareness and encourage the appropriate use of the 988 suicide and crisis lifeline and provide information about suicide prevention. Requires DHS to consult with the Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs (DDAP), 988 crisis call centers within the commonwealth, suicide prevention advocacy groups, mental health crisis counselors and other individuals with lived experience of mental health or substance use crises on the campaign. Outlines specified materials and resources to be used for the administration of this campaign and provides design and advertisement guidelines for posters. Requires DHS to complete and submit a report with specified information to the chairmen and minority chairmen of the House Human Services Committee and the Senate Health and Human Services Committee within 180 days of the effective date of this subsection as well as an updated report with the specified information within one year of the initial report submission date. Effective immediately. (Prior PN: 568)

Intro Date

02/12/2025

Actions

07/14/2025 H - Voted Favorably From Committee - House Appropriations

07/14/2025 H - Re-reported as committed - House Appropriations

07/23/2025 S - Referred to - Senate Health and Human Services

09/10/2025 H - Press Conference on Suicide Prevention Day

10/21/2025 H - Press Conference Held - 988 Public Education Campaign

HB1405 - An Act amending the act of March 10, 1949 (P.L.30, No.14), known as the Public School Code of 1949, in certification of teachers, further providing for career and technical instructional certificate.

Sponsor

Rep. Brian Munroe (D)

Summary

(PN 1604) Amends the Public School Code, in certification of teachers, further providing for career and technical instructional certificate. Includes evidence that a veteran has served in the United States Armed Forces for a minimum of 8,000 hours, equivalent to four years full-time, in the occupational area to be taught, for the issuance of a career and technical instructional certificate. Defines "veteran." Effective in 60 days.

Intro Date

05/05/2025

Actions

10/07/2025 S - Laid out for discussion

10/07/2025 S - Third consideration and final passage

10/08/2025 H - Signed in House

10/20/2025 S - Signed in Senate

10/21/2025 G - Presented to the Governor

HB1900 - An Act amending the act of March 4, 1971 (P.L.6, No.2), known as the Tax Reform Code of 1971, providing for teacher tax credit.

Sponsor

Rep. Nikki Rivera (D)

Summary

(PN 2405) Amends the Tax Reform Code, adding an article to provide for teacher tax credit. Provides definitions. Permits a taxpayer who is a certified teacher and incurs expenses for the purchase of classroom supplies in a taxable year to apply for a tax credit. Asserts that the tax credit shall be equal to 100% of the amount that the taxpayer spent on unreimbursed classroom supplies during the taxable year, up to a maximum of \$100. Adds that if the amount of credit that the taxpayer is eligible to receive exceeds the

taxpayer's tax liability, the Department of Revenue (DOR) shall pay the excess amount to the taxpayer. Outlines eligibility, providing for the determination of eligibility and ineligibility. Prohibits a taxpayer from carrying forward, carrying back, selling, or assigning all or a portion of a tax credit granted to the taxpayer. Permits DOR to develop written guidelines for implementation. Applies this act to taxable years commencing after Dec. 31, 2025. Effective immediately.

Intro Date

10/06/2025

Actions

10/06/2025 H - Introduced

10/06/2025 H - Referred to - House Finance

10/08/2025 H - Discussed during public hearing - House Finance

10/22/2025 H - Meeting Scheduled - 10/28/2025, 10:30 AM - Voting Meeting (House Finance), Room B31, Main Capitol

HB1986 - An Act amending the act of March 10, 1949 (P.L.30, No.14), known as the Public School Code of 1949, providing for mascot transition grants; and establishing the Mascot Grant Fund.

Sponsor

Rep. Christopher M. Rabb (D)

Summary

(PN 2505) Amends the Public School Code, providing for mascot transition grants; and establishing the Mascot Grant Fund within the State Treasury to provide mascot grants to an eligible institution. Provides definitions. Directs the Department of Education to make \$1 million for the fund and allot a one-time mascot grant of up to \$20,000 to an eligible institution that has an American Indian mascot and voluntarily discontinues its use. Mandates that grant money be used to offset costs associated with the discontinued use of an American Indian mascot. Provides for grant applications and criteria. Permits the department to consult with other commonwealth agencies for legal, administrative or cultural guidance. Effective in 60 days.

Intro Date

10/22/2025

Actions

10/22/2025 H - Introduced

10/23/2025 H - Referred to - House Education

HB1987 - An Act amending the act of March 10, 1949 (P.L.30, No.14), known as the Public School Code of 1949, in preliminary provisions, providing for limitation on school mascots.

Sponsor

Rep. Christopher M. Rabb (D)

Summary

(PN 2506) Amends the Public School Code, in preliminary provisions, providing for limitation on school mascots. Prohibits school entities from having or adopting a name, symbol or image that depicts or refers to a Native American tribe, individual, custom or tradition for a mascot, nickname, logo or letterhead unless the school entity meets certain criteria. Stipulates that school entities that fail to comply will be ineligible to be a member of the Pennsylvania Interscholastic Athletic Association (PIAA) or participate in PIAA events. Defines "school entity." Effective in 60 days.

Intro Date

10/22/2025

Actions

10/22/2025 H - Introduced

10/23/2025 H - Referred to - House Education

HB1991 - An Act amending the act of March 10, 1949 (P.L.30, No.14), known as the Public School Code of 1949, providing for Bilingual Educators Advancement Grant Program.

Sponsor

Rep. Manuel Guzman (D)

Summary

(PN 2511) Amends the Public School Code, adding an article to provide for Bilingual Educators Advancement Grant Program. Provides definitions. Establishes the program in the Department of Education (PDE) for awarding grants to eligible individuals. Directs grants to be made to school districts for bilingual certified teacher recruitment and retention activities necessary to increase the number of bilingual certified teachers in schools with a shortage. Specifies that the grants shall be awarded to school districts through a competitive process that takes into consideration certain conditions. Establishes a limitation of not more than 60% of funds being made available to any one school district. Provides for applications by a school district for funding. Stipulates that a person may receive only one award in a school year. Outlines eligibility. Details how the State Board of Education shall determine the number of eligible applicants who will receive an award. Provides for the payment of awards. Requires the board to notify both successful and unsuccessful applicants by September 1 of any school year for which an initial or renewed award is provided to a teacher. Mandates the Secretary of Education to report to the governor and General Assembly by November 1 following the completion of each school year regarding the program. Effective in 60 days.

Intro Date

10/23/2025

Actions

10/23/2025 H - Introduced

10/23/2025 H - Referred to - House Education

SB160 - An Act to provide appropriations from the General Fund for the expenses of the Executive, Legislative and Judicial Departments of the Commonwealth, the public debt and the public schools for the fiscal year July 1, 2025, to June 30, 2026, and for the payment of bills incurred and remaining unpaid at the close of the fiscal year ending June 30, 2025; to provide appropriations from special funds and accounts to the Executive and Judicial Departments for the fiscal year July 1, 2025, to June 30, 2026, and for the payment of bills remaining unpaid at the close of the fiscal year ending June 30, 2025; to provide for the appropriation of Federal funds to the Executive and Judicial Departments for the fiscal year July 1, 2025, to June 30, 2026, and for the payment of bills remaining unpaid at the close of the fiscal year ending June 30, 2025; and to provide for the additional appropriation of Federal and State funds to the Executive and Legislative Departments for the fiscal year July 1, 2024, to June 30, 2025, and for the payment of bills incurred and remaining unpaid at the close of the fiscal year ending June 30, 2024.

Sponsor

Sen. Scott Martin (R)

Summary

(PN 1258) The General Appropriation Act of 2025 provide appropriations from the General Fund for the expenses of the Executive, Legislative and Judicial Departments of the Commonwealth, the public debt and the public schools for the fiscal year July 1, 2025, to June 30, 2026, and for the payment of bills incurred and remaining unpaid at the close of the fiscal year ending June 30, 2025; to provide appropriations from special funds and accounts to the Executive and Judicial Departments for the fiscal year July 1, 2025, to June 30, 2026, and for the payment of bills remaining unpaid at the close of the fiscal year ending June 30, 2025; to provide for the appropriation of Federal funds to the Executive and Judicial Departments for the fiscal year July 1, 2025, to June 30, 2026, and for the payment of bills remaining unpaid at the close of the fiscal year ending June 30, 2025; and to provide for the additional appropriation of Federal and State funds to the Executive and Legislative Departments for the fiscal year July 1, 2024, to June 30, 2025, and for the payment of bills incurred and remaining unpaid at the close of the fiscal year ending June 30, 2024. Increases appropriations for debt services and school employees' pensions. Reduces the legislature's operating expenses. Adds miscellaneous provisions, inserting provisions for the deduction of expenditures under temporary expenditure symbols. Asserts that this act shall apply retroactively to July 1, 2025. Effective immediately. (Prior PN: 1225, 529)

Intro Date

04/03/2025

Actions

10/21/2025 S - Voted favorably from committee on concurrence, as amended - Senate Rules and Executive Nominations

10/21/2025 S - Motion to revert to Prior Printer's No. 529 - Senate Rules and Executive Nominations

10/21/2025 S - Re-reported on concurrence, as amended - Senate Rules and Executive Nominations

10/21/2025 S - Laid out for discussion

10/21/2025 S - Senate concurred in House amendments, as amended by the Senate

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

Sponsor

Sen. Doug Mastriano (R)

Summary

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

Intro Date

02/03/2025

Actions

02/03/2025 S - Introduced

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

10/21/2025 S - Discussed during public hearing - Senate Education

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

10/20/2025 S - Meeting Scheduled - 10/21/2025 - Voting Meeting (Senate Rules and Executive Nominations), Rules Committee Conference Room

10/21/2025 S - Voted favorably from committee on concurrence, as committed - Senate Rules and Executive Nominations

10/21/2025 S - Re-reported on concurrence, as committed - Senate Rules and Executive Nominations

10/22/2025 S - Laid out for discussion

10/22/2025 S - Senate concurred in House amendments

SB315 - An Act amending the act of March 10, 1949 (P.L.30, No.14), known as the Public School Code of 1949, in career and technical education, further providing for career and technical education equipment grants.

Sponsor

Sen. Lynda Schlegel Culver (R)

Summary

(PN 1226) Amends the Public School Code, in certification of teachers, providing an assessment of basic skills; in pupils and attendance, further providing for exceptional children and education and training; in school safety and security, further providing for School Safety and Security Grant Program and providing for school safety and mental health grants for 2025-2026 school year; in Drug and alcohol Recovery High School Program, further providing for scope of program and selection of students and for enrollment of students; in charter schools, further providing for funding for cyber charter schools; in career and technical education, further providing for career and technical education equipment grants; in community colleges, further providing for financial program and reimbursement of payments; in state colleges, further providing for powers and duties of State Board of Higher Education, for definitions, for Performance-Based Funding Council and for public institution of higher education reporting, establishing the State-Related University Performance Fund and providing for Performance-Based Funding formula and for public accountability; in funding for public libraries, providing for state aid for Fiscal year 2025-2026; in reimbursement by commonwealth and between school districts, further providing for student-weighted basic education funding beginning with 2023-2024 school year, for assistance to school districts declared to be in financial recovery status or identified for financial watch status and for Ready-To-Learn Block Grant; and, in construction and renovation of buildings by school entities, further providing for applicability. Removes the requirement of a basic skills assessment for admission into a commonwealth educator preparation program or required for issuance by the Department of Education (PDE) for a certificate type or area, including an instructional, career and technical, education specialist, intern or administrative certificate. Subjects reporting of expenditures related to exceptional students to PDE guidance and lists required contents. Appropriates \$100,000,000 for school safety and mental health grants and \$27,700,000 for targeted school safety grants for the 2025-2026 fiscal year. Elaborates on school safety and mental health grants and the purpose of grants for the 2025-2026 school year. Lists amounts of grants. Provides for the availability of applications. Requires random auditing and monitoring of grant recipients. Defines "school entity." Stipulates beginning in the 2025-2026 school year, a maximum of 35 students in grades 9 through 12 may be enrolled in the Recovery High School under the program at any one time. Provides for non-special education students. Elaborates on the amounts a cyber charter school shall receive for each non-special education student enrolled. Requires PDE to use data for the calculations required under this section based on the most recent years for which data is available, as determined by PDE, and shall fix the data as of the first day of June preceding the school year in which the allocation occurs. Mandates PDE to revise calculations accordingly if the data based on the first day of June is found by PDE to be incorrect. Lists how much each community college shall receive for the fiscal year 2025-2026. Provides several definitions relating to the State Board of Higher Education. Directs the Performance-Based Funding Council to oversee the funding formula by assigning performance goals and weights and make legislative recommendations to the Governor and General Assembly regarding the formula. Provides for council terms of service. Requires the General Assembly and PDE to provide administrative support. Revised powers and duties of the council. Provides for workforce outcomes. Mandates each state-related university to annually transmit data to PDE no later than February 1 of each year and PDE shall transmit data to the Council in a timely manner. Requires PDE to share data with the council and lists applicability. Explains the section's construction. Elaborates on the composition and appropriations of the State-Related University Performance Fund. Provides for the Performance-Based Funding Formula and the student-weighted count. Outlines maximum performance allocation and performance metrics and goals. Provides for other allocation calculations. Highlights the public accountability requirements. Provides for state aid for fiscal year 2025-2026. Specifies amounts and calculations for student-based allocations. Provides applicability. Effective immediately. (Prior PN: 249)

Intro Date

02/26/2025

Actions

10/08/2025 H - Meeting Scheduled - 10/08/2025, 3:00 PM - Voting Meeting (Second Meeting) (House Appropriations), Room 140, Main Capitol

10/08/2025 H - Voted Favorably From Committee as Amended - House Appropriations

10/08/2025 H - Re-reported as amended - House Appropriations

10/08/2025 H - Laid out for discussion

10/20/2025 S - Referred to - Senate Rules and Executive Nominations

SB1014 - 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 bell-to-bell phone-free policy.

Sponsor

Sen. Devlin J. Robinson (R)

Summary

(PN 1227) Amends the Public School Code, in student supports, providing for bell-to-bell phone-free policy. Requires, no later than the start of the 2026-2027 school year, the governing body of each school entity to adopt a policy related to student possession and use of mobile devices during the school day while on school property. Outlines the content requirements of the policy and provides for exceptions. Requires a public comment period before adoption of the policy and the posting of the policy on the school entity's public website no later than five business days after adoption. Establishes reporting requirements and adds definitions. Effective immediately.

Intro Date

10/10/2025

Actions

10/10/2025 S - Introduced

10/10/2025 S - Referred to - Senate Education

10/21/2025 S - Discussed during public hearing - Senate Education

SB1046 - An Act amending Title 75 (Vehicles) of the Pennsylvania Consolidated Statutes, in rules of the road in general, further providing for automated enforcement of failure to stop for school bus with flashing red lights.

Sponsor

Sen. Lisa M. Boscola (D)

Summary

(PN 1266) Amends Title 75 (Vehicles), in rules of the road in general, further providing for automated enforcement of failure to stop for school bus with flashing red lights. Establishes a penalty for the offense of failure to stop for a school bus with flashing red lights on a schedule basis. Redefines fine distribution by percentages. Provides notice of violation to include instruction and an electronic link for the owner of the motor vehicle to view the received video of the alleged violation. Provides for payment of fines. Outlines the procedure for contesting a violation. Provides for department approval. List the act's applicability. Section 3 shall take effect immediately. The remainder of this act shall take effect in 60 days or July 1 of the first school year beginning on or after the effective date of this section, whichever is later.

Intro Date

10/21/2025

Actions

10/21/2025 S - Introduced

10/21/2025 S - Referred to - Senate Transportation

SB1054 - An Act amending the act of March 10, 1949 (P.L.30, No.14), known as the Public School Code of 1949, in school health services, providing for use and maintenance of opioid antagonists.

Sponsor

Sen. Christine M. Tartaglione (D)

Summary

(PN 1245) Amends the Public School Code, in school health services, providing for use and maintenance of opioid antagonists. Directs the Department of Education to develop a policy requiring each school entity offering grades nine, 10, 11 or 12 to provide and maintain onsite opioid antagonists in each school facility attended by students. Permits certain school employees to receive training in the administration of opioid antagonists. Requires training regarding storage, maintenance and administration for school employees designated responsible for storing, maintaining or administering an opioid antagonist. Permits school employees to administer an opioid antagonist to a student or staff member experiencing a suspected opioid overdose. Directs school entities to ensure that at least one trained employee is present on site. Permits school entities to use funds for student health and safety. Provides definitions. Effective in 60 days.

Intro Date

10/17/2025

Actions

10/17/2025 S - Introduced

10/17/2025 S - Referred to - Senate Education

Higher Ed Bill Actions

HB1405 - An Act amending the act of March 10, 1949 (P.L.30, No.14), known as the Public School Code of 1949, in certification of teachers, further providing for career and technical instructional certificate.

Sponsor

Rep. Brian Munroe (D)

Summary

(PN 1604) Amends the Public School Code, in certification of teachers, further providing for career and technical instructional certificate. Includes evidence that a veteran has served in the United States Armed Forces for a minimum of 8,000 hours, equivalent to four years full-time, in the occupational area to be taught, for the issuance of a career and technical instructional certificate. Defines "veteran." Effective in 60 days.

Intro Date

05/05/2025

Actions

10/07/2025 S - Laid out for discussion

10/07/2025 S - Third consideration and final passage

10/08/2025 H - Signed in House

10/20/2025 S - Signed in Senate

10/21/2025 G - Presented to the Governor

HB1991 - An Act amending the act of March 10, 1949 (P.L.30, No.14), known as the Public School Code of 1949, providing for Bilingual Educators Advancement Grant Program.

Sponsor

Rep. Manuel Guzman (D)

Summary

(PN 2511) Amends the Public School Code, adding an article to provide for Bilingual Educators Advancement Grant Program. Provides definitions. Establishes the program in the Department of Education (PDE) for awarding grants to eligible individuals. Directs grants to be made to school districts for bilingual certified teacher recruitment and retention activities necessary to increase the number of bilingual certified teachers in schools with a shortage. Specifies that the grants shall be awarded to school districts through a competitive process that takes into consideration certain conditions. Establishes a limitation of not more than 60% of funds being made available to any one school district. Provides for applications by a school district for funding. Stipulates that a person may receive only one award in a school year. Outlines eligibility. Details how the State Board of Education shall determine the number of eligible applicants who will receive an award. Provides for the payment of awards. Requires the board to notify both successful and unsuccessful applicants by September 1 of any school year for which an initial or renewed award is provided to a teacher. Mandates the Secretary of Education to report to the governor and General Assembly by November 1 following the completion of each school year regarding the program. Effective in 60 days.

Intro Date

10/23/2025

Actions

10/23/2025 H - Introduced

10/23/2025 H - Referred to - House Education

Upcoming Events

TUESDAY - 10/28/2025

9:30 AM, [House Judiciary](#) and [House Children & Youth](#)

Joint Public Hearing, Room 523, Irvis Office Building

Joint public hearing on Juvenile Justice Awareness; [HB 144](#), [HB 1385](#), and [HB 1936](#).

WEDNESDAY – 10/29/2025

9:00 AM, [House Children & Youth](#)

Voting Meeting, Room 523, Irvis Office Building

To consider: [HB 1558](#) and [HR 337](#)

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

Public Hearing, Room B-31, Main Capitol

Public hearing on [HB 1539](#).

10:00 AM, [Pennsylvania Athletic Oversight Committee](#)

Committee Meeting, Room 156, Senate Majority Caucus Room, Main Capitol

The purpose of the meeting is to approve the 2024 PAOC Annual Report, committee reorganization and hold an informational meeting with the Pennsylvania Interscholastic Athletic Association.

11:00 AM, Literacy is Freedom Dyslexia Awareness Month

Press Conference, TBA, Harrisburg Capitol Complex

THURSDAY – 10/30/2025

11:30 AM, PASBO and PASA State Budget Impasse

Press Conference, TBA, Harrisburg Capitol Complex

In the News

[10/21/2025 - Senate Education Committee Examines Cell Phone Use and Policy in Pennsylvania Schools](#)

[10/21/2025 - PSEA president to testify in support of legislation prohibiting student use of cellphones and mobile devices in Pa. public schools](#)

[10/22/2025 - Coleman Measure on School Weapon Incidents Headed to Governor](#)

[10/22/2025 - Allegheny Institute for Public Policy: PASSHE struggles continue](#)

[10/22/2025 - Senate GOP: Senators Recognize National School Bus Safety Week](#)

[10/22/2025 - Senate Dems: Bipartisan School Safety Notification Bill Heads to Governor's Desk](#)

[10/22/2025 - PennDOT: Shapiro Administration Announces Winners of Pennsylvania School Bus Safety Poster Contest and Driving Competition](#)

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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