

Dec. 5 – 11, 2025

Contents

Press Conferences.....	1
Committee News	2
Bullet.in.Points.....	7
Cosponsor Memos	8
Basic Ed Bill Actions	10
Higher Ed Bill Actions.....	14
Upcoming Events	16
In the News	17

SESSION STATUS

At 2:36 p.m. on Wednesday, November 19, 2025, the House stands adjourned until Monday, December 15, 2025, at 12:00 p.m. for non-voting session, unless sooner recalled by the Speaker.

At 3:32 p.m. on Tuesday, December 9, 2025, the Senate recessed until Tuesday, January 6, 2026, at 11:50 a.m. unless sooner recalled by the President Pro Tempore.

UPCOMING SESSION DAYS

House

Dec. 15 (NV), 16, 17
Jan. 6 (NV), 26-28
Feb. 2-4
March 23-25
April 13-15, 27-29
May 4-6
June 1-3, 8-10, 15-17, 22-30
Sept. 28-30
Oct. 5-7, 19-21
Nov. 9, 10

Senate

Jan. 6, 26-28
Feb. 2-4
March 16-18, 23-25
April 20-22
May 4-6
June 1-3, 8-10, 22-26, 29-30

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

Press Conferences

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

PENN STATE FACULTY ALLIANCE ANNOUNCES UPCOMING UNION VOTE

By Julia Walters, Pennsylvania Legislative Services | December 9, 2025

Penn State University (PSU) faculty members, along with Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 668 members, met in the Main Capitol Rotunda today to announce a vote to unionize faculty.

Stephen Catanese, president, SEIU 668, announced that PSU faculty filed to form a union. He mentioned the union would represent over 6,000 faculty and associated positions. Catanese noted it will be “one of the largest union elections” in Pennsylvania history. He explained that the faculty wanted union representation for dignity and transparency in the workplace, job and economic security, as well as the opportunity to have a voice in impactful decision-making. “Those workers should have a voice, and that voice can come through their process, in their union,” Catanese emphasized. He added that PSU will hold the union election in 2026. Catanese mentioned the potential decision to form a faculty union “doesn’t have to be a negative one.” He stressed this can be an opportunity for PSU to build stronger relationships with its faculty while allowing them a voice in the workplace.

Kate Reagan, assistant clinical professor, School of Labor and Employment Relations, Penn State University Park, praised PSU for being her “dream job.” She noted many professors express care and dedication toward their work and students, as well as frustration and anger about work conditions. “The deep care that we have for our students, for our research, for our community, as strong as it is, can’t sustain us through burnouts or unrealistic workloads, staffing challenges, low pay and uncertain job security,” Reagan explained. She added that faculty working conditions are also impacting students and their learning conditions. Reagan mentioned that faculty is unable to contribute “meaningful input” in large-scale administrative decisions, such as campus closures and faculty terms of appointment. She noted faculty should have a voice in these decisions as they understand how the campus runs on a day-to-day basis. “We’re experts, not only in our academic fields, but also in how this institution runs and when it’s running at its best,” Reagan continued.

Julio Palma, assistant professor of chemistry, Penn State Fayette, mentioned that the Fayette campus is one of the planned PSU campus closures. He expressed frustration over “a small group of wealthy individuals” heading large-scale decisions which affected thousands of people and communities, including staff, faculty and students. “The campus closures, as impactful as it is, is just a symptom of a deeper crisis at the core of our mission,” Palma said. He mentioned how faculty and students organized, rallied and spoke to legislators prior to the announcement of the Fayette closure. “We saw it coming,” Palma explained. “Nothing moved the needle.” He emphasized that if a faculty union had existed at the time, it could have elicited different results. Palma stressed a faculty union would afford them “a legally recognized voice to defend our jobs with dignity, to protect our profession, to protect academic freedom [and] to support our students.”

Rocío Sáenz, Secretary-Treasurer, SEIU, said, “Today is an important day for Penn State University and for public higher education in Pennsylvania.” She noted the “major step” of PSU allowing a vote to unionize. Sáenz mentioned the “growing trend” within higher education to

improve working conditions and terms of employment. “I want everyone to know that you have the support of SEIU’s two million members across the country,” Sáenz emphasized. She praised PSU faculty for their commitment to investing in people to make PSU more stable and “better prepared” for future generations of students and workers.

Victor Brunsdon, associate professor of mathematics, Penn State Altoona, stated, “The only cure for democracy is more democracy.” He added that unions are “an exercise in workplace democracy.” Brunsdon stated that faculty can better serve their students and community if they are able to have a say in how their institution is run. “That requires an institution that represents us,” he said. “That means we need the union.”

Catanese acknowledged and thanked members of SEIU Healthcare, Starbucks Workers United and the PA Joint Board of Workers’ United for being present and supporting the upcoming PSU faculty union election.

Maurice Cobb, Secretary-Treasurer, Pennsylvania American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO), stated that when workers are unionized, they are able to secure certain privileges they wouldn’t otherwise have, such as collective bargaining rights, safer workplaces and improved workplace choices. He explained various examples of successful unionization stories within higher education and highlighted the “broader wave of union victories.” He mentioned that no matter if the PSU Faculty Alliance wins or loses their election to unionize, AFL-CIO will stand with PSU in the fight.

Sen. Lindsey Williams (D-Allegheny) praised the work of the Penn State Faculty Alliance. She highlighted that if more Pennsylvania public universities were unionized, communities and local economies would improve. Sen. Williams emphasized the dedication and courage exemplified by PSU faculty by advocating for unionization. “I was illegally terminated for union organizing, so I know this is an intimidating process,” she explained. “But it is so incredibly important to do that, and the only way that you get a seat at the table is by standing together.”



Committee News

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

Senate Transportation Committee

12/09/2025, 9:00 a.m., Hearing Room 1, North Office Building
Pennsylvania Legislative Services

The committee held a public hearing to collect testimony on commercial vehicle safety and non-domiciled commercial driver’s licenses (CDLs).

Chairman Judy Ward (R-Blair) detailed plans to gather expert testimony and share findings with federal partners. She expressed concerns about the public safety threat posed by criminal illegal migrants obtaining driver’s licenses and advocated for a fact-finding hearing to explore the ease of obtaining CDLs or real IDs by foreign citizens. She suggested potential legislative actions to address these concerns, including enhancing penalties and requiring English proficiency.

Minority Chairman Marty Flynn (D-Lackawanna) discussed the importance of Pennsylvania’s licensing system for non-domicile commercial drivers in ensuring roadway safety and federal compliance. He emphasized the need for rigorous safety standards for CDL drivers. He called for a review of the current system to identify necessary updates to maintain the integrity of the licensing and verification processes.

Rebecca Oyler, president and CEO, PA Motor Truck Association (PMTA), discussed the challenges associated with commercial vehicle safety. She detailed that gaps in the CDL system are more amplified in Pennsylvania, due to being one of the busiest freight states in the country. She explained the current process and rules under the administrative stay by the D.C. Circuit Court. He recognized a wide variety in CDL training quality, highlighting two parallel training environments in Pennsylvania through the Department of Education (PDE) or third-party organizations. She noted issues with inadequate training and inconsistent licensing practices. She advocated for strengthening the CDL system through better verification, consistent national standards and improving the quality of CDL training programs.

Jeff Mercadante, chief safety and risk officer, PITT OHIO, LLC, highlighted his organization's commitment to safety. He detailed the challenges posed by inconsistencies in the CDL system, especially regarding non-domicile CDL issuance. He explained the unnecessary risks that the CDL system now puts on organizations that train these truck drivers and put them on the road. He shared an instance when a trainee lied about his experience with driving a commercial vehicle and times when work visas expired, but non-domiciled drivers still had a valid license to operate a commercial motor vehicle. He noted the safety program at PITT OHIO is used to catch discrepancies and fill loopholes in the CDL system. He called for collaborative efforts to strengthen the licensing system and improve commercial vehicle safety. He emphasized the importance of trust and strong training for CDL carriers, both domiciled and non-domiciled.

Chairman Ward asked if Mercadante had a driving school within his organization. Mercadante stated that was correct. Chairman Ward highlighted the challenges in recruiting reliable and skilled individuals for the trucking industry and asked about the truck driver shortage in Pennsylvania. Mercadante explained that the shortage is not of CDL drivers in general but of qualified CDL drivers, with only about 200 of 7,000 applicants being hired annually due to a lack of qualifications. Chairman Ward inquired about the role of non-domiciled CDL holders in the industry, noting a pause in hiring them. Mercadante detailed that his company had identified three non-domiciled CDL drivers with expired work eligibility, leading to their removal from driving roles. Oyler emphasized the importance of treating truck driving as a respected profession. She highlighted the need for quality training and adequate infrastructure, such as truck parking, to attract more drivers. She thanked the Department of Transportation (PennDOT) for addressing the truck parking shortage. Chairman Ward asked about attracting more drivers without resolving the non-domicile CDL issue. Mercadante stressed the potential of reaching out to high school students and the importance of allowing 18 to 20-year-olds to drive commercial vehicles, noting federal restrictions currently prevent this. He mentioned his organization had sought a waiver to address this issue, but it was rejected.

Sen. Wayne Langerholc (R-Cambria) expressed concern over the lack of standardized documents for CDL issuance and asked about past practices for proof of residency in CDL applications. Oyler stated she couldn't address past practices but highlighted the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) audits and recommendations. Sen. Langerholc inquired about the number of third-party CDL examiners and whether PennDOT is the sole agency overseeing third-party CDL testers. Oyler responded that she didn't have the numbers but suggested PennDOT might. Sen. Langerholc raised concerns about the safety implications of issuing CDLs to individuals who lack English language proficiency, questioning the presence of non-English speaking CDL holders on Pennsylvania roads and across the nation. Mercadante agreed that English proficiency should be a requirement for CDL issuance, citing communication issues during accidents. He confirmed that non-English speaking CDL holders are currently operating vehicles in Pennsylvania. Sen. Langerholc called the situation "unacceptable." Oyler explained that a 2016 federal memo led to inconsistent enforcement of language proficiency requirements. She detailed that the Trump administration reinstated these requirements, which are now enforced nationwide, including in Pennsylvania. Sen. Langerholc thanked the testifiers for their remarks on the issue.

Sen. Rosemary Brown (R-Monroe) inquired about the oversight and enforcement of third-party training schools for CDLs. Oyler stated that PennDOT regulates testing organizations, but there is confusion regarding the regulation of training schools themselves. Oyler further explained that the PDE oversees certain training schools, while the FMCSA maintains a list of approved training providers, indicating regulatory gaps. Sen. Brown noted that the PDE seems to merely rubber-stamp federal standards, contributing to fraudulent activities. Anthony Cloud, Director of Safety and Education, PMTA, acknowledged that while some schools adhere strictly to entry-level driver training (ELDT) recommendations, others take shortcuts, indicating a market for inadequate training. Sen. Brown wondered if these issues had been occurring before the COVID pandemic. Oyler detailed that the ELDT requirement was implemented federally in 2022, highlighting the limited authority of PDE over non-compliant training providers. She pointed out gaps in the maintenance and authorization of schools. Sen. Brown expressed concern over the proportion of reputable versus non-reputable schools. Oyler responded that the list of PDE-verified schools is around 30, and the federal government recently decertified 3,000 schools, so that list was not accurate. She explained that the federal government is in the process of revising its list to a new ELDT standard.

Sen. Kim Ward (R-Westmoreland) expressed concerns about Pennsylvania's ability to regulate drivers from other states and asked about federal guidance on this issue. Mercadante suggested enhancing law enforcement to improve safety by shutting down dangerous drivers. Sen. Ward asked whether reinstating the English-speaking portion of the CDL requirements means revoking a driver's CDL if they cannot speak English upon being stopped. Mercadante proposed revoking the CDL of those who fail the English-speaking test. Cloud explained that the Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance added English language proficiency to its out-of-service criteria, but noted the system lacks a rigorous standard for assessing English proficiency.

Sen. Timothy Kearney (D-Delaware) highlighted the focus on CDL mills and expressed concern over the mention of only three non-domicile drivers in a specific company. Mercadante noted the examination was based on a pool of 1,900 drivers. Sen. Kearney asked about industry standards compared to specific company practices and noted the widespread demand for drivers. Oyler emphasized the importance of non-domiciled CDL holders and the need to address issues undermining confidence in CDLs and having non-domiciled drivers with English proficiency. Sen. Kearney discussed the complexities of the trucking industry as an interstate profession and the role of federal regulations.

Sen. Camera Bartolotta (R-Washington) emphasized the importance of ensuring driver proficiency and questioned the measures in place to penalize lenient examiners and schools that allow unqualified individuals to obtain a CDL. Cloud stated there is no current recourse to hold these educators accountable. He stated the federal-entry-level driver training program was a step in the direction of accountability but noted individuals who take advantage of the system. He noted the small number of drivers who are taking shortcuts in the system and giving all non-domiciled drivers “a bad name.” He emphasized the need for stricter punishments and penalties that extend beyond the driver and motor carriers themselves. Sen. Bartolotta discussed the importance of truck deliveries and the challenges faced by the trucking industry, including high insurance costs for hiring under-21 drivers. She detailed a conversation with a trucking company about the value of simulators for training but stressed the importance of on-the-road experience. She suggested a test for under-21 drivers that could allow smaller trucking companies to obtain a waiver for high insurance costs to retain young drivers.

Mike Carroll, secretary, PennDOT, discussed the 1986 Commercial Driver Safety Act, which standardized CDLs across states. He emphasized the importance of federal standards for commercial driving and PennDOT’s compliance with these standards. He addressed recent issues in Kansas and Oklahoma due to federal oversight missteps and highlighted that PennDOT only issues driver’s licenses to residents who are citizens or legally present.

Captain Hardeep Rai, assistant director, Bureau of Patrol, Pennsylvania State Police (PSP), discussed the enforcement of CDL requirements and commercial vehicle safety. He detailed the training and certification of approximately 650 certified commercial vehicle inspectors who conduct around 90,000 roadside inspections annually. He explained the process of verifying the validity of CDLs during inspections and traffic stops and the procedures for dealing with drivers who violate CDL regulations.

Chairman Ward asked about the process of getting a CDL. Kara Templeton, deputy secretary for driver and vehicle services, PennDOT, explained the CDL process in Pennsylvania, including the requirement for a non-commercial license, necessary documentation, a knowledge test, a skills test and completion of entry-level driver training. She noted that successful completion of these steps results in the issuance of a CDL, with a non-domiciled indicator for temporarily residing individuals.

Dr. Lynette Kuhn, deputy secretary and commissioner for postsecondary and higher education, PDE, testified about the challenges in enforcing compliance with commercial vehicle safety and oversight of CDL training providers in Pennsylvania. She highlighted the issue of unlicensed providers and the limited authority of the PDE to remove non-compliant providers from the FMCSA registry. She highlighted the addition of a new position in September 2024 to strengthen enforcement efforts and called for increased collaboration with FMCSA and legislative solutions.

Chairman Ward asked how a non-domiciled CDL could be issued past its expiration date. Templeton specified that immigration documents might have an automatic extension that differs from the visible expiration date, leading to misconceptions about the actual length of stay permitted. Chairman Ward asked Sec. Carroll if PennDOT issued a CDL and Real ID to an individual pulled over in Kansas. Sec. Carroll explained that the individual was lawfully present and had met the requirements for a CDL, having been approved through the Systematic Alien Verification for Entitlement (SAVE) system by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS). He noted that despite the individual's interactions with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), his eligibility for a CDL remained approved. Chairman Ward noted that there seems to be a lack of communication between agencies. Sec. Carroll stated that PennDOT’s role was limited to verifying the driver's eligibility for a CDL through the SAVE system, confirming the driver's eligibility remained in October despite the incident.

Sen. Langerholc inquired about a November 19 letter from the United States Department of Transportation (USDOT) concerning alleged inefficiencies and noncompliance in the issuance of CDLs. Sec. Carroll confirmed his familiarity. Sen. Langerholc stated that the letter indicated a 30-day response period and assumed a response was being crafted. Sec. Carroll confirmed a response was being drafted. Sen. Langerholc highlighted the risk of losing \$75 million in federal funding due to non-compliance, with the potential loss increasing to \$150 million if corrective actions are not taken. Sec. Carroll confirmed those losses could be true with non-compliance. Sen. Langerholc asked if there are 12,436 non-domiciled commercial learner’s permit (CLP) or CDL holders. Sec. Carroll stated the number was somewhere in between 10,000 and 11,000 CDLs. Sen. Langerholc asked if the secretary could provide verification that all 11,000 of the CDL carriers are in the state lawfully. Sec. Carroll confirmed Pennsylvania exceeds federal standards by keeping copies of proof of residency documents for non-domiciled CLPs or CDLs, even though it’s not federally required. Sen. Langerholc cited a letter that contradicted claims of undocumented individuals, asserting he could provide documentation proving all 11,000 individuals are lawfully within the state. Sec. Carroll confirmed the possession of documentation proving individuals’ lawful presence. Sen. Langerholc brought up a September 2025 date related to regulatory differences in establishing lawful presence, referencing a letter about changes in requirements. Sec. Carroll asked if this was about the interim final rule. Sen. Langerholc confirmed the relation to the interim final rule, noting the specific requirements for lawful presence documentation before September 29, 2025. Sec. Carroll highlighted the suspension of licenses for non-domiciled residents due to the interim final rule, despite being stayed by a DC circuit court injunction. Sen. Langerholc asked about CDLs applied for under the stayed interim rule. Templeton explained the FMCSA’s review process and the timeline leading up to the interim final rule, indicating

that the review was conducted under existing federal regulations before the interim final rule's release. Sen. Langerholc acknowledged his question was answered regarding the stay on non-domicile CDL issuance and the interim final rule. Templeton confirmed that Pennsylvania paused the issuance of non-domicile products following USDOT's announcement. Sen. Langerholc assumed Templeton's responses indicated all 11,000 individuals have established lawful presence, mentioning the state driver licensing agency (SDLA) would handle these cases individually. Sec. Carroll confirmed the suspension of CDL issuance to non-domiciled individuals and acknowledged the previous case-by-case handling of non-domiciled product applications. He admitted the possibility of errors but expressed confidence in the accuracy of most licenses issued.

Sen. Bartolotta thanked Sec. Carroll for his responses on driver's license issuance and testing for non-English speakers, asking if CDL written tests are now only in English due to federal mandates. Sec. Carroll specified that CDL knowledge tests are available in multiple languages, with English proficiency assessed during the on-road test. Sen. Bartolotta wondered about the logic of not conducting the knowledge test in English to show proficiency before driving. Sec. Carroll responded that federal regulations do not mandate English proficiency for CDL knowledge tests, except for hazardous material endorsements. Sen. Bartolotta detailed her understanding of the Trump administration's English proficiency requirement for all CDLs. Sec. Carroll stated this requirement was not included in the interim final rule.

Sen. Brown discussed concerns about illegal aliens obtaining driver's licenses or Real IDs in Pennsylvania, emphasizing the importance of addressing these questions by constituents. Sec. Carroll emphasized that illegal aliens cannot obtain any type of driver's license in Pennsylvania, citing the requirement for lawful presence or citizenship. He acknowledged the challenge of fraudulent documentation. Sen. Brown asked about proactive measures against document falsification from an agency standpoint. Sec. Carroll mentioned the reliance on the DHS' SAVE system for non-domicile individuals' applications and the importance of communication with ICE for concerns.

Sen. Bartolotta raised the issue of high-quality fake IDs and driver's licenses from China. She asked about the effectiveness of tools like scanners for verifying international driver's licenses' authenticity at the municipal level. Templeton explained that the international document is a translation tool for foreign licenses, not an identification form, and deferred to state police for expertise on counterfeit IDs. Lt. Mike Pavelko, director of the commercial vehicle safety division, Bureau of Patrol, PSP, stated that a CDL is run through several checks when a commercial motor vehicle is stopped to verify its validity, proper endorsements of the operator, proper class of license and any driver restrictions. He explained that the tool referred to by Sen. Bartolotta would need to be looked into further, noting he would reach out to the vehicle fraud investigators, but has not seen it roadside before. Sen. Bartolotta asked about the PSP's ability to validate foreign licenses and determine their authenticity, specifically mentioning licenses from countries like Ireland. Pavelko responded that they could contact an organization for checks on licenses from island countries but was not familiar with all the tools used for this purpose. He offered to gather more information. Sen. Bartolotta inquired about legislative actions that could enhance safety and accuracy to close existing loopholes. Sec. Carroll expressed interest in understanding the outcomes of hearings and discussions before making solid recommendations. He emphasized the importance of contemplation by various stakeholders on future steps. Sen. Bartolotta suggested increasing fines for bad actors from the current \$2,500, arguing it was not a sufficient deterrent.

Sen. Nikil Saval (D-Philadelphia) asked whether PennDOT's practices, particularly regarding the SAVE database and document retention, exceed federal requirements. Sec. Carroll confirmed that PennDOT exceeds federal standards by checking the SAVE system and maintaining document copies to prove legal residence. Sen. Saval questioned whether issues related to immigration enforcement and communication could be attributed to the federal government. Sec. Carroll noted the FMCSA's recent actions of deleting 3,000 schools and placing 4,000 on probation suggest that issues with the SAVE system should be addressed by DHS. He lamented that no representative from DHS is present at today's hearing, despite an invitation being extended.

Chairman Ward inquired if PennDOT would do everything in its power to prevent the withholding of \$75 million in critical federal transportation funding. Sec. Carroll responded affirmatively. Chairman Ward further asked if there were additional measures beyond current efforts to prevent these issues from occurring. Sec. Carroll stated that PennDOT complies with both state and federal laws and regulations, especially regarding CDLs, and would adapt to any changes in U.S. or Pennsylvania laws.

Chairman Ward concluded the panel by thanking the testifiers. She highlighted that key findings would be shared with federal partners for a public response.



Senate Education Committee

12/09/2025, 10:00 a.m., Room 8E-A, East Wing
Pennsylvania Legislative Services

The committee met to consider legislation.

[SB 116](#) - (PN 67) Amends the Public School Code, in terms and courses of study, providing for credit for employment at congregate care facilities requiring a student who is in grade 11 or 12 at a school entity or nonpublic school and who is employed, either on a paid or voluntary basis, at a congregate care facility may earn one elective credit toward graduation for every 250 hours worked at the congregate care facility, for a maximum of two elective credits toward graduation and the school entity or nonpublic school shall develop or modify an existing application process and form for the student seeking elective credit under this section with the appropriate criteria and requirements with deadlines of application submissions. Adds that the school entity or nonpublic school may not award the elective credit to the student unless the school entity or nonpublic school has approved the student's application and the student has satisfied all the requirements under this section. Specifies definitions. Effective in 60 days. The bill was unanimously **reported as amended**.

[A01782](#), by Argall, provides for age requirements and vocational education. The amendment was unanimously **adopted**.

[A02209](#), by Argall, provides for a corrected definition of non-public school. The amendment was unanimously **adopted**.

Sen. David Argall (R-Schuylkill), prime sponsor of the bill, explained his legislation would allow 11th and 12th grade students to earn up to two elective credits for graduation for employment in a health care, long-term care facility, personal care home or assisted living center. He highlighted that the bill is part of a package designed to address the shortage of workers in care facilities. He said he worked with several stakeholders to facilitate compromise in the legislation.

[SB 974](#) - (PN 1115) Amends the Public School Code, in miscellaneous provisions relating to institutions of higher education, further providing for Dual Credit Innovation Grant Program. Extends the program to community education councils in collaboration with one or more higher education institutions to offer dual credit opportunities to high school students enrolled in a school entity. Adds community education councils to the list of priorities and additional priority in program grant funding. Provides for data collection on the number of college credits earned by students enrolled in dual credit courses offered by a collaboration between a community education council and an institution of higher education, the number of students enrolled in the courses that were offered in this collaboration and the percentage of dual credit students who earned college credits through this collaboration at an institution of higher education following high school graduation. Defines "community education council." Effective in 60 days. The bill was unanimously **reported as committed**.

Sen. Scott Hutchinson (R-Venango) prime sponsor of the bill, discussed the legislation's focus on Community Education Councils (CECs) in providing post-secondary educational opportunities in educationally underserved areas, particularly in rural counties. He highlighted the flexibility of CECs in meeting local employers' needs and their role in facilitating dual credit programs for high school students. Sen. Hutchinson emphasized the bill's aim to provide eligibility for the dual credit Innovation Grant Program for CECs, prioritizing funding for courses in high-demand occupations.

Minority Chairman Lindsay Williams (D-Allegheny) expressed support but raised concerns about the potential stretching of limited funds. She emphasized the importance of making dual credit opportunities affordable, inclusive and high-quality across the commonwealth. "My hope is that in the upcoming budget, we can work to increase the pie and not just divide the pie into smaller pieces," she said.

Sen. Dawn Keefer (R-York) asked if CECs are not currently eligible for the grant funding. Sen. Hutchinson confirmed.

[SB 1014](#) - (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. The bill was unanimously **reported as amended**.

[A02214](#), by Culver, provides for the effective date to start at the beginning of the 2027-2028 school year. The amendment was unanimously **adopted**.

Sen. Devlin Robinson (R-Allegheny), prime sponsor of the bill, explained that his legislation is aimed at addressing smartphone distractions in schools. He detailed that teachers have seen how difficult it is for students to maintain self-control regarding devices and how social media conflicts often spill into the schools. “Study after study shows children who receive smartphones at a young age are significantly more likely to experience serious mental health issues, including aggression, emotional instability and suicidal thoughts,” he said. “Studies also show excessive screentime interferes with healthy brain development, emotional regulation and real-world social skills.” He urged support for the legislation to capitalize on educational investments.

Sen. Steven Santarsiero (D-Bucks), a co-sponsor of the bill, shared his teaching experience, emphasizing the distraction caused by phones and the importance of focusing on socialization and relationship-building in schools. “It’s not only about socialization,” he said. “It’s about learning how to develop relationships with other people, and that’s a critical part of our education system too.”

Sen. Greg Rothman (R-Cumberland) questioned the reason for the delayed start date. Cindy Urban, Republican executive director, explained it would give schools more time to develop policies and secure necessary resources. Urban also noted that schools could implement phone restriction policies before the 2027-2028 school year if possible.

Sen. Keefer sought clarification on the amendment’s specifics, particularly regarding the removal of certain sections related to the Pennsylvania Youth Survey and the department’s report production. Urban explained that the amendment eliminates mandates that the department post copies of school entities’ policies.

Chairman Williams discussed the mixed feedback on the amended bill, emphasizing the need for further refinement. She further addressed concerns from the Pennsylvania Principals Association regarding how students can still access Safe-to-Say services without their phones. She highlighted that there should be a public comment period. She stated that although she supports the bill, there should be more flexibility for schools and students. “I’m hopeful that given the interest in this issue, we can continue to refine the legislation while keeping the ball rolling,” she said.

Sen. Rothman expressed his support for the bill, acknowledging the balance between the benefits and drawbacks of technology.

Sen. Argall said he supports the bill, highlighting its timeliness and the challenges faced in advancing the issue.

Sen. Keefer expressed concerns about the bill’s “one-size-fits-all” approach. She said that she would prefer schools to examine the issue and implement customized cell phone bans that work better for their districts’ needs.

Sen. Jarrett Coleman (R-Lehigh) said he supports the bill. He discussed the negative effects of cell phone use in schools on academic performance and bullying. He emphasized the significant changes in communication and technology.

Sen. Carolyn Comitta (D-Chester) expressed her support for the bill. She expressed hope that concerns from stakeholders would be considered in future discussions.

Chairman Lynda Schlegel Culver (R-Northumberland) noted the committee had a hearing on the topic in October, where issues regarding developmental delays and distractions were addressed regarding the use of cell phones in schools. She said she looks forward to continuing to discuss the topic with members and stakeholders.



Bullet.in.Points

GENERAL ASSEMBLY: RECENT ACTIONS DURING THE 2025 REGULAR SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The General Assembly released a summary of recent actions taken during the 2025 Regular Session. Additional information is available on the *Pennsylvania Bulletin*.

Cosponsor Memos

HCO2912 - Continuing Education in Trauma-Informed Maternity Care

Sponsor

Rep. Marla Brown (R)

Summary

Requires licensed professionals who provide maternity care to complete at least four hours of continuing education in trauma-informed care as a condition of licensure renewal.

Intro Date

12/05/2025

Last Action

12/05/2025 H - Cosponsor memo filed

HCO2916 - Strengthening Professional Employee Protections in Schools

Sponsor

Rep. Milou Mackenzie (R)

Summary

Aims to erase a gap in the verification process and ensure that children receive only the most qualified individuals to lead as principals, superintendents and other professional employees in the commonwealth's school districts.

Intro Date

12/08/2025

Last Action

12/08/2025 H - Cosponsor memo filed

HCO2919 - Protecting Safe2Say Something program confidentiality

Sponsor

Rep. Kristin Marcell (R)

Summary

Increases the penalty for violating the confidentiality requirement of the Safe2Say Something program to a misdemeanor of the second degree.

Intro Date

12/09/2025

Last Action

12/09/2025 H - Cosponsor memo filed

HCO2922 - Adding administrative space to the aggregate building standard in schools

Sponsor

Rep. Tim Brennan (D)

Summary

Aims to amend Act 34 of 1973 to give schools flexibility to include administrative space and offices for school staff, support personnel and guidance counselors, when calculating school construction costs.

Intro Date

12/10/2025

Last Action

12/10/2025 H - Cosponsor memo filed

HCO2924 - Increasing Student Success with More School Counselor Support

Sponsor

Rep. Mandy Steele (D)

Summary

Aims to establish the School Counseling Services Act, ensuring the planning and coordination necessary for counselors to fully use their training and expertise.

Intro Date

12/10/2025

Last Action

12/10/2025 H - Cosponsor memo filed

SCO1428 - Recognizing National FFA Week in Pennsylvania (February 21st through the 28th, 2026)

Sponsor

Sen. Elder A. Vogel (R)

Summary

Resolution that designates the week of February 21st through the 28th, 2026, as "National FFA Week" in Pennsylvania.

Intro Date

12/09/2025

Last Action

12/09/2025 S - Cosponsor memo filed

SCO1431 - Indiana University of Pennsylvania's 150th Anniversary

Sponsor

Sen. Joe Pittman (R)

Summary

Resolution recognizing and honoring the 150th anniversary of Indiana University of Pennsylvania (IUP).

Intro Date

12/10/2025

Last Action

12/10/2025 S - Cosponsor memo filed

SCO1432 - Resolution Designating January 25 through January 31, 2026 as "Catholic Schools Week" in PA

Sponsor

Sen. Scott Martin (R)

Summary

Resolution designating the week of January 25 through January 31, 2026, as "Catholic Schools Week" in Pennsylvania.

Intro Date

12/11/2025

Last Action

12/11/2025 S - Cosponsor memo filed

Basic Ed Bill Actions

HB2092 - An Act amending the act of March 10, 1949 (P.L.30, No.14), known as the Public School Code of 1949, in school finances, providing for reduction of school district debt.

Sponsor

Rep. Seth M. Grove (R)

Summary

(PN 2688) Amends the Public School Code, in school finances, providing for reduction of school district debt. Asserts that a school district that received money for a construction project approved by the Department of Education (PDE) under Article XVII-E.2 of the Fiscal Code before the effective date of section 641 will reduce any debt incurred by the school district in an amount equal to the money received by the school district. Asserts that a school district that received money for a construction project approved by the Department of Education (PDE) under Article XVII-E.2 of the Fiscal Code after the effective date of section 641 must use the money to reduce any debt incurred by the school district to pay for the construction project. Stipulates that the school district will reduce its millage rate as the school district reduces the debt incurred for the project. Defines "project." Effective in 60 days.

Intro Date

12/09/2025

Actions

12/09/2025 H - Introduced

12/09/2025 H - Referred to House Education

HB2095 - 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 mandate waiver program.

Sponsor

Rep. Seth M. Grove (R)

Summary

(PN 2691) Amends the Public School Code, in preliminary provisions, providing for mandate waiver program. Permits a board of school directors to adopt a resolution to apply to the Department of Education (PDE) for a waiver of any provision of this act, the regulations of the State Board of Education or the standards of the Secretary of Education if the waiver will enable the school district to improve its instructional program or operate in a more effective, efficient or economical manner. Elaborates on the role of the intermediate unit for the waiver process. Outlines the waiver form and what it must include. Establishes PDE duties. Lists certain act provisions and provisions of 22 Pa. Code (relating to education) that are not subject to waivers. Prohibits seeking a waiver of any federal law or state law applicable to a public school that is not within the provisions of the act. Requires the PDE to post all approved and disapproved waiver requests on its website. Asserts that nothing in this section shall be construed to supersede or preempt any provisions of a collective bargaining agreement in effect on the effective date of this section. Provides other entities to which the acts' provisions are not subject. Effective in 60 days.

Intro Date

12/09/2025

Actions

12/09/2025 H - Introduced

12/09/2025 H - Referred to House Education

SB116 - An Act amending the act of March 10, 1949 (P.L.30, No.14), known as the Public School Code of 1949, in terms and courses of study, providing for credit for employment at congregate care facility.

Sponsor

Sen. David G. Argall (R)

Summary

(PN 1351) Amends the Public School Code, in terms and courses of study, providing for credit for employment at congregate care facility. Permits a student who is in grade 11 or 12 at a school entity or nonpublic school, at least 16 years of age and who is employed, either on a paid or voluntary basis, at a congregate care facility to earn one elective credit toward graduation for every 250 hours worked at the congregate care facility, for a maximum of two elective credits toward graduation and the school entity or nonpublic school shall develop or modify an existing application process and form should the student elective credit under this section with the appropriate criteria and requirements with deadlines of application submissions. Adds that the school entity or nonpublic school may not award the elective credit to the student unless the school entity or nonpublic school has approved the student's application and the student has satisfied all the requirements under this section. Directs school entities and nonpublic schools to ensure that the student's employment at the congregate care facility satisfies the requirements of 22 Pa. Code 339.29. Specifies definitions. Effective in 60 days. (Prior PN: 67)

Intro Date

01/22/2025

Actions

06/10/2025 S - Discussed at LeadingAge PA Press Conference

12/05/2025 S - Meeting Scheduled - 12/09/2025, 10:00 AM - Voting Meeting (Senate Education), Room 8E-A, East Wing

12/09/2025 S - Voted Favorably From Committee as Amended Senate Education

12/09/2025 S - Reported as amended Senate Education

12/09/2025 S - First consideration

SB299 - An Act amending the act of March 10, 1949 (P.L.30, No.14), known as the Public School Code of 1949, providing for Pennsylvania Promise Program; and establishing the Pennsylvania Promise Program Fund.

Sponsor

Sen. Vincent J. Hughes (D)

Summary

(PN 1348) Amends the Public School Code, providing for Pennsylvania Promise Program; and establishing the Pennsylvania Promise Program Fund. Provides definitions. Establishes the Pennsylvania Promise Program with the Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency. Provides for the administration of the fund and contributions. Stipulates that an eligible student may receive a scholarship for tuition and fees at a state-owned institution or state-related institution for the academic year if the student has a total annual household income that does not exceed \$250,000. Provides for scholarships at community colleges. Provides for limitations on scholarships and renewals. Provides for scholarships for room and board. Directs the agency to accept applications from an eligible adult learner. Stipulates that the household income limits will be increased by a percentage equal to the percentage change in the Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U). Directs the agency to submit an annual report. Effective immediately.

Intro Date

12/05/2025

Actions

12/05/2025 S - Introduced

12/05/2025 S - Referred to Senate Education

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 1352) Amends the Public School Code, in student supports, providing for bell-to-bell phone-free policy. Requires, no later than the start of the 2027-2028 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, the amending of an existing 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. (Prior PN: 1227)

Intro Date

10/10/2025

Actions

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

12/05/2025 S - Meeting Scheduled - 12/09/2025, 10:00 AM - Voting Meeting (Senate Education), Room 8E-A, East Wing

12/09/2025 S - Voted Favorably From Committee as Amended Senate Education

12/09/2025 S - Reported as amended Senate Education

12/09/2025 S - First consideration

SB1111 - An Act amending the act of March 10, 1949 (P.L.30, No.14), known as the Public School Code of 1949, in school security, further providing for school security personnel.

Sponsor

Sen. Jarrett Coleman (R)

Summary

(PN 1346) Amends the Public School Code, in school security, further providing for school security personnel. Directs school entities to have at least one full-time school security personnel who has completed the training under section 1305-C, 1313-C (a.1) or 1314-C on duty in each school building during the school day unless the school entity has been granted a waiver, beginning with the 2026-2027 school year. Effective in 60 days.

Intro Date

12/05/2025

Actions

12/05/2025 S - Introduced

12/05/2025 S - Referred to Senate Education

SB1116 - An Act amending the act of March 10, 1949 (P.L.30, No.14), known as the Public School Code of 1949, in terms and courses of study, providing for communism education.

Sponsor

Sen. Doug Mastriano (R)

Summary

(PN 1356) Amends the Public School Code, in terms and courses of study, providing for communism education. Requires school entities to provide age-appropriate instruction to students on the origins, development and core tenets of communist ideology, the historical establishment and governance of communist regimes around the world, documented human rights abuses, restrictions, economic fails and social impacts, first-person accounts, survivor testimony or primary source materials related to persecuted persons and a comparison of communist political systems with the democratic principles of the U.S. Directs the Department of Education to develop and publish all documents appropriate for use in satisfying subsection (a) and make them available on its website. Requires the department to make professional development programs to assist educators available and outlines qualifying delivery methods. Establishes reporting requirements. Adds definitions. Effective in 60 days.

Intro Date

12/10/2025

Actions

12/10/2025 S - Introduced

12/10/2025 S - Referred to Senate Education

Higher Ed Bill Actions

HB2084 - An Act amending the act of March 10, 1949 (P.L.30, No.14), known as the Public School Code of 1949, providing for Pennsylvania Promise Program; and establishing the Pennsylvania Promise Program Fund.

Sponsor

Rep. Jordan A. Harris (D)

Summary

(PN 2680) Amends the Public School Code, providing for Pennsylvania Promise Program; and establishing the Pennsylvania Promise Program Fund. Adds definitions. Directs the agency to administer the program and allows the agency to promulgate regulations as necessary. Establishes the Pennsylvania Promise Program Fund in the State Treasury, outlines the administration, contributions and investment and purpose of the plan. Provides for nonlapsing and the reallocation of funds. Provides for an application process for scholarships for tuition and fees, outlining eligibility and requirements. Outlines the review and approval process and the distribution requirements. Provides for limitations and renewals. Provides for scholarships for room and board, outlining application, eligibility distribution and limitation requirements. Provides for aid for adult reeducation, outlining eligibility and

application requirements. Increases the household income limits by a percentage equal to the percentage change in the Consumer Price Index and provides for the coordination of the programs. Establishes annual reporting requirements. Effective immediately.

Intro Date

12/05/2025

Actions

12/05/2025 H - Introduced

12/09/2025 H - Referred to House Education

HB2099 - An Act amending the act of March 10, 1949 (P.L.30, No.14), known as the Public School Code of 1949, providing for Delayed Payment Plan Program; establishing the Delayed Payment Plan Program Fund; and imposing duties on the Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency.

Sponsor

Rep. Eddie Day Pashinski (D)

Summary

No summary available yet.

Intro Date

12/11/2025

Actions

12/11/2025 H - Introduced

SB299 - An Act amending the act of March 10, 1949 (P.L.30, No.14), known as the Public School Code of 1949, providing for Pennsylvania Promise Program; and establishing the Pennsylvania Promise Program Fund.

Sponsor

Sen. Vincent J. Hughes (D)

Summary

(PN 1348) Amends the Public School Code, providing for Pennsylvania Promise Program; and establishing the Pennsylvania Promise Program Fund. Provides definitions. Establishes the Pennsylvania Promise Program with the Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency. Provides for the administration of the fund and contributions. Stipulates that an eligible student may receive a scholarship for tuition and fees at a state-owned institution or state-related institution for the academic year if the student has a total annual household income that does not exceed \$250,000. Provides for scholarships at community colleges. Provides for limitations on scholarships and renewals. Provides for scholarships for room and board. Directs the agency to accept applications from an eligible adult learner. Stipulates that the household income limits will be increased by a percentage equal to the percentage change in the Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U). Directs the agency to submit an annual report. Effective immediately.

Intro Date

12/05/2025

Actions

12/05/2025 S - Introduced

12/05/2025 S - Referred to Senate Education

SB974 - An Act amending the act of March 10, 1949 (P.L.30, No.14), known as the Public School Code of 1949, in miscellaneous provisions relating to institutions of higher education, further providing for Dual Credit Innovation Grant Program.

Sponsor

Sen. Scott Hutchinson (R)

Summary

(PN 1115) Amends the Public School Code, in miscellaneous provisions relating to institutions of higher education, further providing for Dual Credit Innovation Grant Program. Extends the program to community education councils in collaboration with one or more higher education institutions to offer dual credit opportunities to high school students enrolled in a school entity. Adds community education councils to the list of priorities and additional priority in program grant funding. Provides for data collection on the number of college credits earned by students enrolled in dual credit courses offered by a collaboration between a community education council and an institution of higher education, the number of students enrolled in the courses that were offered in this collaboration and the percentage of dual credit students who earned college credits through this collaboration at an institution of higher education following high school graduation. Defines “community education council.” Effective in 60 days.

Intro Date

08/25/2025

Actions

08/25/2025 S - Introduced

12/05/2025 S - Meeting Scheduled - 12/09/2025, 10:00 AM - Voting Meeting (Senate Education), Room 8E-A, East Wing

12/09/2025 S - Voted Favorably From Committee Senate Education

12/09/2025 S - Reported as committed Senate Education

12/09/2025 S - First consideration

Upcoming Events

TUESDAY – 12/16/2025

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

Voting Meeting, Room 205, Ryan Office Building

To consider: [HR 370](#)

In the News

[12/08/2025 - Expanding Opportunities and Strengthening PA's Workforce: Shapiro Administration Invests Nearly \\$4.2 Million in Advanced Manufacturing Training Programs](#)

[12/08/2025 - Bartolotta Celebrates Greene County Educator Named 2026 Pennsylvania Teacher of the Year](#)

[12/09/2025 - Senate Confirms Governor Shapiro's Nominee Dr. Carrie Rowe as Pennsylvania Secretary of Education](#)

[12/09/2025 - Bipartisan Bill to Prohibit Student Cellphone Use During School Day Passes Senate Education Committee](#)

[12/09/2025 - Penn State Faculty File For A Union](#)

[12/09/2025 - PSEA commends Pa. Senate committee for advancing legislation prohibiting use and restricting possession of student mobile devices during school day](#)

[12/10/2025 - PASSHE: Expanded Employer Partnerships Prepare Students for In-Demand Careers](#)

[12/10/2025 - Senator Lindsey M. Williams Applauds Senate Confirmation of Education Secretary Carrie Rowe](#)

[12/10/2025 - Bartolotta Congratulates Cecil Intermediate Fifth-Grader Selected for Statewide Drug-Free Calendar](#)

[12/10/2025 - Senator Culver Chairs Senate Education Committee Meeting to Advance Key Education Bills](#)

[12/11/2025 - Shapiro Administration Boosts Funding for Pennsylvania's Public Libraries, Promoting Literacy, Education, and Lifelong Learning for All Pennsylvanians](#)

[12/11/2025 - Shapiro Administration Highlights New 2025-26 Budget Investments to Expand and Support Pennsylvania's Child Care Workforce](#)

[12/11/2025 - Pennsylvania academic achievement from 2015 to 2025](#)

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.

Copyright © 2025. All materials contained in the Education Recap are protected by US copyright law and may not be reproduced, distributed, transmitted, displayed, published, broadcast, modified, electronically forwarded or copied, in whole or in part, without prior written permission from Pennsylvania Legislative Services to purchase the rights to make or forward additional copies.

Provided by Pennsylvania Legislative Services
409 N. 2nd Street, Suite 212
Harrisburg, PA 17101
Phone: 717.236.6984
www.mypls.com