

Education Recap



Jan. 16 – 22, 2026

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SESSION STATUS

At 12:04 p.m. on Tuesday, January 6, 2026, the House met briefly in non-voting session and now stands adjourned until Wednesday, January 28, 2026, at 12:00 p.m., unless sooner recalled by the Speaker.

At 12:31 p.m. on Tuesday, January 6, 2026, the Senate recessed until Monday, January 26, 2026, at 1:00 p.m. unless sooner recalled by the President Pro Tempore

UPCOMING SESSION DAYS

House

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

Press Conferences

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

No press conferences this week.

Committee News

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

House Republican Policy Committee

*01/22/2026, 9:00 a.m., Hilton Garden Inn Indiana at IUP, 714 Pratt Drive, Indiana
Pennsylvania Legislative Services*

The committee held a public hearing to discuss how to address challenges in rural health care.

Chair David Rowe (R-Snyder) thanked Indiana County officials for a great tour of the Indiana County Office of Planning and Development. He acknowledged Rep. Jim Struzzi (R-Indiana) for his work on issues affecting rural communities and thanked him for hosting the event.

Michael Driscoll, president, Indiana University of Pennsylvania (IUP), highlighted the importance of the state system of Pennsylvania's universities and IUP's role as an economic engine in Indiana County. He emphasized its contribution to education, research and the well-being of the commonwealth. He noted that 90% of IUP's student body is from Pennsylvania, with many being first-generation college students, veterans or older learners. He highlighted IUP's focus on providing practical, career-ready skills and introduced the proposed osteopathic medicine college expected to open in 2027 to address Pennsylvania's rural health care crisis.

Chair Rowe thanked Driscoll for his dedication to serving students and staff at IUP and outlined the day's hearing focus on finding solutions to the physician shortage in rural Pennsylvania through collaboration between higher education and health care institutions.

Arielle Chortanoff, vice president of state advocacy, The Hospital and Healthsystem Association of Pennsylvania (HAP), emphasized the challenges faced by hospitals in maintaining low costs per discharge while dealing with staffing shortfalls and outdated regulatory structures. She highlighted the insufficiency of the Rural Health Transformation Program in offsetting losses from chronic underfunding and upcoming Medicaid cuts. She called for sustainable hospital payments, medical liability reforms, workforce incentives and regulatory modernization. She expressed a willingness to partner with state policymakers moving forward to combat the challenges faced by hospitals.

Dr. Lara Luetkehans, provost and vice president for academic affairs, IUP, discussed the health care workforce shortage in Pennsylvania, especially in rural areas, and outlined IUP's response through a coordinated workforce strategy. She detailed IUP's contributions to the health care sector, including its nursing program, which produces around 120 graduates annually. She introduced the proposed College of Osteopathic Medicine at IUP as a solution to address workforce needs. She highlighted the school's approach to serving rural communities and how it adopted a whole-person approach to medicine. She further discussed IUP's strategies to address

rural health workforce needs. She noted increases in students pursuing STEM-H fields at IUP. She recommended solutions such as training medical students in rural environments and expanding nursing and allied health programs that emphasize success in exam preparation. She detailed the importance of partnerships with hospitals and health systems for education, training and workforce development.

Stephen Wolfe, president and CEO, Indiana Regional Medical Center (IRMC), discussed the critical role of local hospitals as safety nets and the economic impact of hospitals on local communities. He highlighted the struggles faced by rural hospitals, including the risk of closures and challenges in recovering from COVID-19. He pointed out the shortcomings of financial instability, rising costs and workforce shortages affecting rural health care. He noted significant compliance burdens with Department of Health (DOH) regulations, billing issues and credentialing delays for new hire clinicians. He advocated for increased medical assistance reimbursement, gap-filling grants, protection of the 340B Drug Pricing Program, workforce development assistance and a reduction of regulatory barriers.

Dr. Kelly Meyer, emergency medicine practitioner, IRMC, shared her personal journey in the medical field and the success of the IRMC family medicine residency program in retaining graduates within the state, particularly in western Pennsylvania. She addressed the challenges of staff shortages and the necessity of offering higher salaries to keep physicians in rural areas.

Rep. Struzzi emphasized the importance of focusing on solutions and innovative approaches to overcome challenges of rural health care, such as maximizing buying power among rural hospitals and streamlining regulations. He praised the impact of local initiatives like the School of Osteopathic Medicine and the Homer City redevelopment project on the workforce and community health. He asked for more details about the rural health care network that has been created through IRMC. Wolfe discussed the importance of partnerships with IUP and the College of Medicine in recruiting doctors to rural areas. He highlighted the success of a residency program and the creation of the Pennsylvania Mountain Care Network. He noted the network includes hospitals in Armstrong, Punxsutawney and Indiana counties and has led to growth and improved negotiations. He expressed interest in further expansion. Rep. Struzzi asked Wolfe for more details on the operational aspects of these initiatives. Wolfe credited the success to hospital administrators and board leadership, emphasizing a regional approach and the combined financial strength of the hospitals, which totals \$600 million annually, enhancing their negotiating power.

Rep. Eric Nelson (R-Westmoreland) expressed concerns about rural health, particularly the shortage of obstetrician doctors in Indiana County and the impact of a PA Supreme Court decision on venue shopping and liability issues. He inquired about increasing residency opportunities in Pennsylvania to address medical professional shortages. Dr. Miko Rose, founding dean, IUP College of Osteopathic Medicine, discussed strategies to address the need for obstetrics and gynecology (OB-GYN) services and decrease health care deserts, including the potential of family practice residencies and additional training models. She emphasized the importance of innovative training and collaborative efforts to prevent the expansion of health care deserts. Rep. Nelson highlighted the issue of maternal care deserts in Pennsylvania, suggesting leveraging Grow PA scholarships as a model for creating targeted residency stipend incentives to attract medical professionals to rural areas. He wondered how the commonwealth could build off those existing successes. Rose agreed with Rep. Nelson's points, emphasizing the impact of medical malpractice insurance on health care delivery. She detailed the importance of creative solutions, including funding opportunities for trainees to retain medical professionals in specific regions. Rep. Nelson asked about the potential impact of incentives, such as higher wages in residency programs or faster loan forgiveness, on addressing the challenges faced by medical professionals. Meyer agreed with Rep. Nelson and highlighted the salary disparities of around \$10,000 between Altoona and Pittsburgh, with more rural areas. She recommended that higher rural stipends would help bring more physicians and maintain them after completing their residency programs.

Rep. Jamie Barton (R-Schuylkill) discussed the partnership with Temple University on a rural dental clinic in Schuylkill and Berks counties. He highlighted the challenge of attracting and retaining medical professionals in rural areas. He acknowledged that the program produces 10 dental graduates per year and brings 24 dental practitioners to rural Pennsylvania, asking for strategies to incentivize medical professionals to practice in rural settings. Luetkehans emphasized a comprehensive approach to encourage future physicians to practice in rural areas, including guiding them from education through residency and into their careers. She highlighted partnerships and collaborations aimed at making medical education accessible and affordable in rural settings. Rose discussed the effectiveness of "grow your own" models for recruiting rural physicians, emphasizing the importance of targeting first-generation undergraduates and physicians. She detailed working with the Center for Rural PA to identify traits of physicians likely to remain in rural areas and highlighted IUP's efforts to support potential first-generation physicians. Rep. Barton expressed support for the "grow your own" model. Chortanoff highlighted the role of residency stipends and loan repayment programs in attracting and retaining medical professionals in rural areas. She referenced [HB 157](#) as a successful example. She emphasized the importance of these programs in encouraging medical students to work in rural areas. Rep. Barton highlighted the discussion on outdated regulations and regulatory difficulties in health care across Pennsylvania. He discussed sustainability payment reimbursement and medical liability reform as key issues. He asked about specific regulatory burdens that should be prioritized to improve rural health care. Chortanoff discussed the challenges posed by outdated regulations on hospital modernization and patient care in rural communities. She mentioned efforts by HAP to address the cost impact of the outdated regulatory structure on Pennsylvania hospitals. Wolfe commended HAP's efforts in addressing regulatory issues. He offered to provide a prioritized list of key aspects for

regulatory review from all hospitals.

Rep. Clint Owlett (R-Tioga) expressed optimism about a resurgence in rural Pennsylvania and the importance of health care in supporting this trend. He expressed his happiness with the potential of the “grow your own” model. He inquired about strategies to attract high school students into rural health care, specifically asking about initiatives to encourage them to pursue nursing and career advancement within the health care system. Luetkehans emphasized the importance of pushing dual enrollment credits with high schools in courses that focus on health care careers. She detailed how these courses will make college more affordable, shorten time in college and allow students to learn more about the field. She recognized another strategy to begin introducing health care careers in technical schools, highlighting partnerships with IUP and IRMC to bring these opportunities to high school students. She noted other opportunities with IRMC for early career exploration that become very competitive. Dr. James Kinneer, chief human resource officer, IRMC, highlighted the “grow your own” approach to attract health care professionals to rural areas. He detailed programs at IRMC for high school and pre-med students to shadow doctors and gain insight into rural health care. He emphasized the importance of early health care career interest and supporting non-traditional learners through apprenticeships. Rep. Owlett agreed, stating the importance of engaging with students as early as possible.

Rep. Lee James (R-Venango) asked about the top three cost drivers in health care, inquired about a study on antiquated regulations and sought opinions on the effectiveness of telemedicine. Chortanoff identified regulatory complexity, underfunding, rising drug costs, equipment expenses, workforce costs and medical liability costs as significant drivers of health care costs. She emphasized the need for adequate salaries and benefits for medical staff. Rose explained her focus on medical admissions processes and her collaboration on a study surveying rural physicians, distinguishing it from the topic of antiquated regulations. Chortanoff highlighted a HAP study aiming to quantify the costs to hospitals due to outdated regulatory structures. Kinneer stated that telemedicine is effective for rural health care but faces sustainability challenges due to reimbursement rates not matching the cost of providing services. Rose shared her positive experience with telemedicine in psychiatry, highlighting its effectiveness for physician-to-physician consultations. She detailed its ability to improve access to health care for residents in rural areas. She recalled its use for OB-GYNs to help rural hospitals have successful deliveries. She called it a “very powerful tool.” Luetkehans emphasized the importance of digital literacy and broadband access from a consumer perspective for effective telemedicine use. She discussed projects aimed at building these competencies and trust in telemedicine.

Rep. Leslie Rossi (R-Westmoreland) raised concerns about the need for broader outreach to high school students in her district. She recognized the need to include students with average grades in shadowing programs for various hospital roles, not just students with a 4.0 GPA. She highlighted the barriers for these students who also may not have doctors and nurses in their family or are not exposed to a hospital when younger. She asked about strategies to involve teachers in identifying potential candidates for these programs. Kinneer acknowledged the importance of attracting individuals to a variety of health care roles. He detailed efforts to raise awareness among students through school presentations, health career events and partnerships with educational institutions. He emphasized the need for a more consistent focus to expand these outreach activities. Rep. Rossi expressed concern about IUP students aspiring to health care professions but struggling academically or financially, leading them to leave the field. She highlighted the cases of two students who felt lost after having to switch careers due to these struggles. Luetkehans explained IUP's support for students struggling academically through a Student Success infrastructure. She stated this support group includes faculty advisors, navigators and an exploratory structure for those not initially meeting program criteria. She highlighted the importance of investing in student support to expand program capacities, especially for nursing. She discussed the potential for exploring multiple career pathways for students in a degree or pre-med program. She explained the licensed practical nurse (LPN) to a bachelor's in science nursing degree (BSN) program at IUP, addressing the marketing and awareness challenges in health care professions. She emphasized the importance of exploratory experiences in high school and middle school. She suggested more partnerships for short-term credentials to prepare the workforce for a wider range of health care careers. Rose stated the need for additional academic and psychological support for students in the College of Medicine, especially those from “rural tracks” facing cultural changes. She highlighted the importance of teaching students how to study for challenging exams. Chortanoff cited the success of an inaugural virtual career day in the past year aimed at broadening students' understanding of health care professions beyond traditional roles. She noted that the event saw participation from over 100 schools and plans are in place to repeat it next year for wider dissemination. Rep. Rossi asked about the current status of the travel nurse issue. She discussed the wage disparity between long-term hospital nurses and traveling nurses and the disruption it causes in hospitals, especially in rural areas. She expressed concern over the impact on dedicated staff and the attractiveness of travel nursing to new graduates. Kinneer spoke about the additional costs and pressure that agency fees put on hospitals. He noted the decrease in fees due to the decrease in demand for travel nurses. He stated the issue was headed in a positive direction. He emphasized the need to fill the open positions with staff who want to stay in rural areas to permanently decrease the use of travel nurses. He discussed the wage disparity and other challenges, such as the workload on employees, looking for ways to have a better balance to address shortages. He detailed issues with the need for more behavioral health services, filling critical vacancies and overall financial disparities with reimbursement and increasing technology and supply costs.

Rep. Martin Causer (R-McKean) shared a personal anecdote about his daughter's positive experience with a residency program. He expressed concern about the lack of facilities for delivering babies in his region, leading to roadside and ambulance births and infant fatalities. He asked how to ensure the effective use of incoming federal funds to address challenges in rural Pennsylvania. Chortanoff stated that the state is expecting \$193 million this year from the Rural Health Transformation fund and highlighted the importance of directing these funds primarily to hospitals. She detailed efforts to work with the administration and other entities to ensure the effective use of these funds, including the implementation of rapid response grants and the establishment of Rural Care Collaboratives. Rep. Causer thanked Chortanoff for her insights and stressed the importance of considering all regions of the state to maximize the use of the Rural Health Transformation fund. He highlighted the need to assess what each region lacks, mentioning obstetrics as a significant issue in his region.

Rep. Mike Armanini (R-Clearfield) expressed his readiness to work on legislation aimed at addressing health care issues in rural Pennsylvania. He acknowledged the challenges of attracting professionals to rural areas and called for action to improve the situation. Chortanoff outlined that her organization is focusing on financial stability, workforce issues, medical liability and regulatory reform this year to assist rural areas.

Chair Rowe highlighted the financial burden of regulatory compliance on hospitals, citing a \$39 billion national cost and a \$1,200 cost per admitted patient. He shared an anecdote about a local hospital's experience with regulatory excess and asked for specific examples of outdated or absurd regulatory requirements. Wolfe acknowledged the efforts of HAP in prioritizing state issues and estimated that about 20% of their resources are dedicated to meeting regulatory requirements. He committed to providing more detailed information on the impact of regulatory compliance on costs. Rose explained that approximately 27% of a full-time equivalent is the estimated time spent in direct patient care. Chair Rowe thanked the participants for their insights on the burdensome nature of regulatory compliance.

Rep. Struzzi thanked all the testifiers for their remarks. He asked Meyer to share the reasons that motivated her to pursue a career in the health care field and why she chose to return to a rural area for her residency. Meyer shared her journey into medicine, which began as a medical assistant in Indiana, followed by earning her bachelor's degree at St. Francis University and completing prerequisites for medicine at IUP. She explained that she then attended St. George's University in Grenada for medical school and returned to Western Pennsylvania for her residency, highlighting her commitment to serving her community. Rep. Struzzi expressed hope that the event would lead to identifying and implementing solutions for health care challenges in rural Pennsylvania.

Chair Rowe emphasized the importance of collaboration between state and local entities to address rural health care challenges, including physician shortages and regulatory burdens. He noted progress in addressing Pennsylvania's physician shortage, especially in Indiana County under Rep. Struzzi's leadership, and announced the next hearing in Philadelphia to examine a new federal scholarship tax credit.



Joint Senate Communications & Technology and Senate Institutional Sustainability & Innovation Committee

01/22/26, 1:00 p.m., 351 N Sumneytown Pike, North Wales, PA

Pennsylvania Legislative Services

The committees held a joint public hearing on how artificial intelligence (AI) is transforming Pennsylvania's biotech sector.

Chair Tracy Pennycuik (R-Berks), Senate Communications and Technology Committee, convened the hearing to discuss AI's impact on the biotech industry, emphasizing the importance of supporting innovation in Pennsylvania's biotech sector while ensuring safety and ethical integrity.

Chair Frank Farry (R-Bucks), Senate Institutional Sustainability and Innovation Committee, highlighted the significance of the life science community to society and the economy, and the role of the Institutional Sustainability and Innovation Committee in supporting the life science sector in Pennsylvania.

Minority Chair Timothy Kearney (D-Delaware), Senate Institutional Sustainability and Innovation Committee, emphasized the importance of the life sciences industry to southeast Pennsylvania and the state's prosperity.

Terri Lee Taylor, vice president of state government relations, Merck, outlined the company's investment in Pennsylvania, including over \$4.1 billion between 2018 and 2024. She plans for an additional investment of more than \$3.2 billion between 2025 and 2029, highlighting Merck's role as a major employer and manufacturer in the state.

Kurt Imhof, senior vice president of policy and public affairs, Life Sciences PA, discussed the economic impact of the life sciences sector in Pennsylvania, as well as the potential of AI in reducing drug discovery costs. He advocated for state policies to support the growth of life sciences companies, emphasizing the importance of maintaining a competitive business and policy climate in Pennsylvania to support the life sciences and AI sectors.

Chair Pennycuick asked what the industry is looking for from the legislature and how they can ensure that AI innovation grows responsibly but efficiently. Imhof recommended that the state government maintain a high-level monitoring approach regarding the use of AI in drug development, suggesting that decisions should be based on federal developments with the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). Chair Pennycuick expressed her approval of the idea of less bureaucracy.

Chair Farry asked about the specific ways in which AI can reduce the time to bring new medicines or technologies to patients and inquired about actions the state can take to accelerate this process. Imhof discussed the potential benefits of AI in accelerating the clinical trial process for drug development, suggesting leveraging Pennsylvania's health systems and diverse patient population to enhance clinical trial efficiency. He noted Pennsylvania's ranking as one of the top five states in clinical trial activity and advocated for state support in accessing data to improve clinical trials.

Sen. Maria Collett (D-Montgomery) emphasized the importance of protecting patient data in the context of AI's role in drug development and asked about the necessary privacy standards or data governance frameworks Pennsylvania should adopt. Imhof discussed the importance of HIPAA laws in regulating member interactions with patient data but admitted the association is still determining its position on statewide privacy standards or data governance frameworks for AI in drug development.

Dr. Jacob Gardner, assistant professor of computer and information science, University of Pennsylvania (UPenn), discussed the transformative potential of AI in drug discovery, highlighting recent advances in generative AI and its applications in biology and biomedical research. He emphasized the shift towards generalist AI models that can learn from diverse data sources to predict drug properties and the role of AI in advancing personalized medicine.

Dr. Burak Ozdoganlar, Ver Planck professor, Mechanical Engineering and Biomedical Engineer, Carnegie Mellon University (CMU), discussed his work at CMU, focusing on the integration of AI with micro and nano scale engineering for medical technologies. He highlighted the transformative potential of AI in life sciences, such as diagnosing diseases, accelerating drug development and reducing clinicians' administrative burdens. He provided examples of AI applications in his research, including a \$50 million AI science foundry and projects funded by ARPA-H. He emphasized the importance of collaboration across universities, health systems and industry, secure computing infrastructure and workforce development to advance AI and biomedical technologies.

Chair Pennycuick asked what universities are doing regarding ensuring that undergraduate students are embracing AI technology. Gardner described the significant growth in his machine learning class at UPenn, noting that the class now fills one of the largest auditoriums with 300 to 400 students and over 1,000 on the waitlist annually. He highlighted the diverse interests in the course from students across various fields and mentioned the challenge of accommodating this demand due to space limitations. Ozdoganlar discussed efforts at CMU to integrate AI into educational programs, emphasizing the popularity of AI classes and the necessity of adapting teaching methods to prepare students for the future workforce. He mentioned that committees have been working on integrating AI into classes for the past four or five years.

Chair Kearney asked Gardner about the potential state policy of prohibiting state-funded research from being behind paywalls. Gardner responded that top research venues in machine learning and AI have always been open access, with significant conferences publishing papers freely available. Chair Kearney inquired about the protocol for using parts from papers, to which Gardner emphasized the importance of acknowledging previous work without financial compensation. He mentioned the federal mandate for National Institute of Health (NIH) funded research to be submitted to public repositories like PubMed, indicating a move towards more open access. Chair Kearney acknowledged the capability of AI to analyze thousands of papers and emphasized the non-financial aspect of this process. Gardner discussed AI's application in surfacing useful information for making predictions. Chair Kearney asked about the verification process for data obtained from AI, expressing concerns about errors. Gardner answered that AI's application in early-stage drug development focuses on statistical correctness and listed the varying requirements for AI systems depending on their use, especially in patient care. Chair Kearney discussed the confidence in data accuracy due to large sample sizes. Gardner expressed confidence in AI's ability to approximate the value of data in early-stage drug development, aiming to reduce financial losses from unsuccessful drugs.

Sen. Collett asked Ozdoganlar about privacy concerns related to wearable devices that deliver continuous, real-time data, inquiring about patient consent, data ownership, how the data is shared, and the overall use of such data, especially for aging adults. Ozdoganlar responded that while the issue was not his area of expertise, he believed data consent should mirror existing medical consent practices. He argued that patients should have control over their data, including the option to store it personally and decide what information is shared with health care professionals. He emphasized that any shared data should be governed by clear agreements limiting its use strictly to patient treatment, and he maintained that such data would not be sent to public AI systems but handled within private, secure frameworks already used in health care. Sen. Collett expressed concerns about the intersection of insurance coverage and patient data privacy, emphasizing the need for legislative efforts to ensure patient safety and data privacy while acknowledging the benefits of innovative health care tools.

Chair Frank Farry asked about the interest among students in AI, particularly in the Life Sciences field. Gardner confirmed the high interest in Life Sciences among AI-interested students, mentioning his oversubscribed advanced machine learning class at UPenn, which focuses on generative AI for science and has a waitlist of 150 students despite a capacity of 50. Ozdoganlar noted the keen interest of mechanical and biomedical engineering students in utilizing AI in biosciences, stressing the importance of understanding both the fundamentals of AI and its practical applications in their future careers.

Chair Frank Farry emphasized the importance of developing the life sciences industries in Pennsylvania and the necessity of a workforce skilled in AI as its use in life sciences grows.

Disclaimer: Due to technical issues with the livestream, the rest of the hearing is currently unavailable.



Senate Labor and Industry Committee

*01/22/2026, 1:00 p.m., International Union of Painters and Allied Trades, 101 E. Ewing Road, Carnegie
Pennsylvania Legislative Services*

The committee held a public hearing on Senate Bill 1076.

[SB 1076](#) – (PN 1378) The Local Hire Act requires a percentage of workers on a public works project to be hired from the local labor market; imposing duties on the Department of Labor and Industry; and imposing penalties. Defines “department,” “employer,” “job order,” “local labor market,” “maintenance work,” “one-stop delivery system,” “PA CareerLink office,” “primary residence,” “public body,” “public works project,” “secretary,” “worker” and “work performed under a rehabilitation program.” Provides that at least 50% of workers for a public works project should be hired from the local labor market, taking into account residency preference requirements. Requires an employer to inform the PA CareerLink office of the number of workers needed for a project if they do not meet the required minimum number of workers from the local labor market. Details the issuance of a waiver by the department secretary if the PA CareerLink office is unable to refer sufficient qualified job applicants within three business days of the posted job order, stating the unavailability of applicants. Provides that the waiver allows the employer to fill open positions from outside the local labor market. Requires the waiver to be issued to both the employer and the public body within three business days of notification by the PA CareerLink office of unavailability. Details the employer’s requirement to contribute an equal amount to the training fund required by the collective bargaining agreement covering the worker classification at the location of the public works project for each worker covered by the waiver. Provides for the calculation of the contribution by the number of hours worked multiplied by the training fund contribution rate per hour. Requires contributions to be paid to the department and deposited in the Reemployment Fund. Details the employer shall keep a record of the name and primary residence of each worker on the project, which shall be preserved for two years from the date the worker was last employed. Provides that the record is open at all times for inspection of the public body awarding contracts and to the secretary. Establishes that the secretary shall provide written notice to the employer and the public body of any employer violations, stating the number, a description and the penalty amount if violations continue. Provides for a \$250 administrative penalty per worker, less than the required threshold of 50% per day after the written notice of violation is issued by the secretary. Provides for a penalty of not more than \$1,000 for a first violation of section 4 and a penalty of not more than \$2,500 for each subsequent violation. Requires all administrative penalties collected to be deposited in a restricted revenue account in the General Fund to be used for future enforcement of the act. Provides that the department can establish regulations to implement this act. Applies to public works projects advertised for bids on or after January 1, 2027. Effective immediately.

Chair Devlin Robinson (R-Allegheny) opened the public hearing by discussing legislation aimed at requiring contractors on public works projects to use local labor. He mentioned SB 1076 was designed to support local workers with Pennsylvania tax dollars and was modeled after similar programs in other states.

Joe Hughes, director, government relations, International Union of Painters and Allied Trades District Council 57 (IUPAT DC 57), discussed the importance of prevailing wage laws dating back to the Davis-Bacon Act of 1931. He argued that SB 1076 would protect local workers' wages from being undercut by outside labor and would support Pennsylvania workers and taxpayers. Hughes emphasized the role of construction jobs in providing middle-class lifestyles and advocated for the bill to secure the future of young residents in Pennsylvania.

Aaron Joseph, communications and political specialist, IUPAT DC 57, spoke on behalf of a "fellow building trades member," as described by Chair Robinson. Joseph read the statement that expressed strong support for the Local Hire Act and highlighted its benefits for local economies and communities. He emphasized the importance of investing public dollars in local workers to ensure wages stay within the community. Joseph pointed out SB 1076's requirement for public works projects to employ at least 50% local labor. He mentioned its provisions for transparency, accountability and support for job training and apprenticeship programs.

Chair Robinson asked about the origins of the Local Hire Act idea and inquired about any local projects awarded to out-of-state contractors that encountered problems. Hughes shared his experience with the Seventh Street Bridge project in downtown Pittsburgh, where hiring 60 out-of-state bridge painters resulted in nearly \$5 million in wages leaving the local economy. He emphasized the negative impact on the local trades' community and the lack of long-term investment in local public services. Chair Robinson inquired about the wages for non-local laborers on the Seventh Street project, specifically the average earnings for painters. Hughes detailed that the prevailing wage for painters was around \$58 to \$60 an hour. He mentioned that while other trades on the project were local and unionized, the painting portion employed out-of-state labor and was \$668,000 over budget on a \$25 million project. Hughes mentioned legal actions against the contractor for misclassification of workers and a Federal False Claims Act lawsuit, resulting in penalties and legal fees. Chair Robinson discussed the negative impact of wages leaving the state and highlighted that such practices do not support the local economy or tax base. He asked Hughes how much their IUPAT facility costs. Hughes stated their facility was on the "lower end," but that it costs money. He mentioned every member of IUPAT contributes to their Joint Apprenticeship Training Committee (JATC) when using out-of-state workers. Hughes said members pay "82 cents an hour, every hour" for workers who are brought in from another state. "That's only fair, and we do that gladly," he added. "Those future workers are paying for the pensions of the previous workers who paid to train them."

Minority Chair John Kane (D-Delaware) discussed his background in the plumbing industry and the importance of fair wages, apprenticeship programs and local workforce participation in projects. He supported initiatives that aim to reflect local demographics in construction projects.

Sen. Camera Bartolotta (R-Washington) expressed concern about the qualifications of out-of-state workers on taxpayer-funded projects and emphasized the high skill level and training of Pennsylvania unions. Hughes discussed the challenges of accountability in workforce training and safety, particularly regarding lead contamination among bridge painters, and highlighted a proposed bill that could introduce additional accountability for Pennsylvania organizations.

Hank Butler, contract lobbyist, Pennsylvania Council of General Contractors, expressed support for SB 1076 but raised concerns about potential retribution from other states and suggested alternative training methods to PA CareerLink. He voiced concerns about the requirement to disclose personal information of employees.

Justin Erdner, president, Associated Builders and Contractors (ABC) of Western Pennsylvania, discussed the proposed Local Hire Act and highlighted the construction workforce shortage. He suggested modernization of apprenticeship regulations. Erdner raised concerns about SB 1076's local hiring requirements and the feasibility of meeting the 50% local worker requirement. He criticized the proposed penalties for non-compliance.

Chair Robinson compared West Virginia's local hire law with the proposed Pennsylvania legislation, noting that Pennsylvania's bill is less restrictive and includes all border counties of neighboring states. Butler acknowledged the positive start of the discussion on local hiring but expressed concerns about Pennsylvania contractors bidding on jobs in Virginia and suggested considering a state radius or a multi-state approach for hiring. He requested specific data on projects completed by out-of-state contractors to better understand the situation. Chair Robinson emphasized the importance of advertising good wages to attract more workers to the building trades.

Chair Kane asked if the organizations represented agree with the prevailing wage. Butler responded that his employees have been using the prevailing wage since the early 1960s and sometimes pay more than the minimum required amount. Erdner confirmed that their members are fully compliant with the law regarding prevailing wages. Chair Kane then asked whether the representatives' organizations support the concept of minimum wage without advocating for its increase. Butler highlighted that the demand for

skilled workers in the construction industry makes the concept of minimum wage irrelevant, as companies pay well above it. Erdner agreed, noting his members pay well above the minimum wage. Chair Kane discussed the importance of offering good wages, health benefits and pension plans to address labor shortages, sharing his experience in Delaware, where such benefits have eliminated recruitment problems. Butler disagreed with Chair Kane's perspective on labor shortages and wages, stating that contractors in his organization pay competitive wages and invest in their employees' education and growth. Erdner agreed that members "pay good wages." He emphasized efforts to attract individuals to the construction trades by working with school districts and expressed his commitment to the construction industry as a whole. Chair Kane inquired about the sources from which contractors find trained personnel. Erdner mentioned that ABC and his organization have companies investing millions into trade schools like Thaddeus Stevens College of Technology to train employees and help students enter the trades. He explained the difficulty in hiring for apprenticeship programs is due to the insufficient number of journeymen available to train more apprentices, but highlighted success in attracting high school graduates by presenting the financial benefits of trade jobs over college degrees. Butler discussed the challenges with labor brokers in the construction industry and mentioned that ABC and the building trades are seeking solutions to issues arising from unqualified labor brokers and the lack of skilled workers. Butler shared an incident from York County involving a labor broker paying workers under the table for drywall jobs, using a residential house for the operation. He explained this as an example of the broader issue of under-the-table labor brokers and the need to address worker misclassification.

Donta Green, executive director, Trade Institute of Pittsburgh (TIP), explained the importance of the Local Hire Act in connecting training to employment opportunities for local workers. He highlighted TIP's success in graduating over 100 students and stressed the need for policies that ensure these trained individuals can access jobs in their communities, particularly on public projects. Green shared a personal story to illustrate the positive impact of local employment on community pride and well-being and advocated for the Local Hire Act to benefit the Pennsylvania workforce and its communities.

Chair Robinson asked Green about his tenure at TIP. Green responded that he has been with the institute for nine years, serving as the executive director for the last six. Green mentioned that TIP had an all-time high enrollment of 107 students last year, with an expected 25% increase to about 134 students this year. He noted a significant spike in the waiting list, indicating growing interest in the trades. Chair Robinson inquired about TIP's recruitment process. Green highlighted the role of a community engagement coordinator and the effectiveness of word-of-mouth recruitment, with 80% of their students recruited in this way. He shared the success of program graduates in securing high-paying jobs. Chair Robinson asked what other kinds of involvement TIP's graduates receive. Green expressed pride in the involvement of program graduates with the organization, including their financial support and participation in an Alumni Council advising on improvements. He shared a 70% retention rate of graduates staying in their field of employment after completing the program.

Chair Kane asked Green about the funding sources for his organization. Green responded that funding comes from the Philadelphia community, government contracts, individual donations and some earned revenue opportunities. He mentioned that about 40% of TIP's funding is supported by the Philadelphia community. Chair Kane described a Philadelphia apprenticeship program where many students applied to trades that they didn't fully understand and argued that young people should be guided into careers they actually want and are suited for. He emphasized the need to support and mentor disadvantaged youth during interviews and training, recognizing their backgrounds and helping them build confidence in blue-collar career paths. Green stated Chair Kane had "hit the nail on the head" regarding why TIP is different from other apprenticeship programs. Green highlighted his organization's unique approach to workforce development through comprehensive wraparound services, including life coaching and weekly counseling sessions, aimed at improving employability and rewiring participants' mindsets for long-term job sustainability.

Patricia Blumenauer, deputy secretary, workforce development, Department of Labor and Industry (L&I), stated that while hiring local workers for public projects is a strong economic strategy, the proposed local labor hire legislation raises concerns about implementation and administrative burden. She warned that requirements such as mandatory use of PA CareerLink, a three-day referral window and an unclear waiver process could slow hiring, reduce efficiency and strain department resources unless the language is revised.

Christopher Hallock, deputy secretary, safety and labor management relations, L&I, supported the initiative for local hire programs but noted the additional administrative and enforcement obligations it would place on his bureau, requiring more funding for staffing and training.

Chair Robinson inquired about the L&I's data collection methods for enforcing prevailing wage laws. Hallock responded that they do not proactively collect data but conduct audits if there are allegations of non-compliance. He mentioned that there are currently 34 investigators, an increase from the high 20s in previous years. He noted that violations of prevailing wage laws and other laws enforced by their agency have been steadily increasing.

Chair Robinson asked Blumenauer about data collection on the future workforce and any recognized trends. Blumenauer mentioned the lack of specific data sources for information on the future workforce supply, explaining her department's reliance on apprenticeship and training programs for estimates due to the absence of solid data. Chair Robinson asked whether there is tracking

of state-funded projects to monitor the employment of Pennsylvania residents. Blumenauer responded that her department does not collect data on the future workforce at this time.

Disclaimer: Due to technical difficulties, a portion of this public hearing is currently unavailable.



Bullet.in.Points

No Bullet.in.Points this week.

Cosponsor Memos

HCO3032 - THON 2026: Love Leads Forward

Sponsor

Rep. Kerry A. Benninghoff (R)

Summary

Resolution to congratulate THON 2026 (the Penn State University IFC/Panhellenic Dance Marathon) and to recognize the students and organizers.

Intro Date

01/21/2026

Last Action

01/21/2026 H - Cosponsor memo filed

HCO3033 - Lowering the Voting Age for School Board Elections

Sponsor

Rep. John C. Inglis (D)

Summary

Amends Pennsylvania Elections Code to allow 16- and 17-year-olds to vote in school board elections.

Intro Date

01/21/2026

Last Action

01/21/2026 H - Cosponsor memo filed

HCO3041 - Easing Restrictions on Dental School Faculty

Sponsor

Rep. Maureen E. Madden (D)

Summary

Expands where a dentist with a restricted faculty license may practice to include clinical facilities owned and operated by a dental school or an affiliated nonprofit academic health care center

Intro Date

01/22/2026

Last Action

01/22/2026 H - Cosponsor memo filed

SCO1497 - Updating Tuberculosis Testing Requirements for School Volunteers and Student Teachers

Sponsor

Sen. Daniel Laughlin (R)

Summary

Revises the tuberculosis (TB) testing requirement for school volunteers and student teachers to prioritize student health and safety.

Intro Date

01/22/2026

Last Action

01/22/2026 S - Cosponsor memo filed

Basic Ed Bill Actions

HB1131 - 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 prohibited substances in competitive foods.

Sponsor

Rep. Natalie Mihalek (R)

Summary

(PN 1416) Amends the Public School Code, in school health services, providing for prohibited substances in competitive foods. Prohibits public schools from selling or offering certain competitive foods on school grounds during a school day. Provides definitions. Effective July 1, 2027.

Intro Date

04/21/2025

Actions

04/17/2025 H - Introduced

04/21/2025 H - Referred to House Consumer Protection, Technology and Utilities

05/13/2025 H - Discussed during public hearing House Consumer Protection, Technology and Utilities

01/21/2026 H - Press Conference Held - Secretary Kennedy Kicks Off "Eat Read Food Tour" Rally

HB2148 - An Act amending the act of March 10, 1949 (P.L.30, No.14), known as the Public School Code of 1949, requiring certain school entities to adopt policies and procedures relating to access to school property by individuals or certain enforcement officials; and providing for training, reporting to governing bodies of school entities and for department guidelines.

Sponsor

Rep. Joseph C. Hohenstein (D)

Summary

(PN 2774) Amends the Public School Code, requiring certain school entities to adopt policies and procedures relating to access to school property by individuals or certain enforcement officials; and providing for training, reporting to governing bodies of school entities and for department guidelines. Provides several definitions. Declares that beginning with the 2025-2026 school year and each year thereafter, each school entity shall provide assurance of continued access to the school entity's school zones to each student, parent, guardian and school personnel, regardless of immigration status. Outlines required policies and resolutions and the publication of resolutions. Lists policy requirements. Asserts that the school entity shall notify the parent or guardian of any student subject to a request for access or entry to a school entity or school zone by an immigration enforcement agency or an enforcement agency within 48 hours of the request. Provides for training and details the content of training. Further requires training for professional development. Mandates the submission of incident reports and lists what the report must include. Directs the Department of Education to develop and publish guidelines. Effective immediately.

Intro Date

01/16/2026

Actions

01/16/2026 H - Introduced

01/20/2026 H - Referred to House Education

HB2149 - An Act establishing the Executive Functioning and Study Skills Grant Program for public school entities and the Executive Functioning and Study Skills Fund.

Sponsor

Rep. Jennifer O'Mara (D)

Summary

(PN 2775) The Strategies and Techniques for Unlocking Development in Youth Act establishes the Executive Functioning and Study Skills Grant Program for public school entities and the Executive Functioning and Study Skills Fund. Provides several definitions. Explains the purpose of the program. Outlines the Department of Education's duties. Details the process for grant applications. Asserts that grant awards shall be initially awarded by the department no later than February 1, 2027, and each February 1 thereafter. Explains permitted use of grant money. Provides for the distribution formula. Highlights the operation of the Executive Functioning and Study Skills Fund within the State Treasury. Requires a public school entity to comply with all applicable state and local procurement requirements, policies and procedures when expending grant money. Mandates the submission of an annual report to the department that includes pre and post assessment data. Effective immediately.

Intro Date

01/16/2026

Actions

01/16/2026 H - Introduced

01/20/2026 H - Referred to House Education

HB2152 - 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, further providing for School Safety and Security Grant Program; and, in terms and courses of study, providing for delaying secondary school start times.

Sponsor

Rep. Jill N. Cooper (R)

Summary

(PN 2779) Amends the Public School Code, in school safety and security, further providing for School Safety and Security Grant Program; and, in terms and courses of study, providing for delaying secondary school start times. Includes costs associated with the planning, implementation or operation of a later school start time for which the committee shall provide grants to school entities. Permits the governing body of a school entity to adopt a policy to implement an instructional day start time at the secondary school level to start no earlier than 8:30 a.m., imposing duties on the governing body prior to adopting the new start time. Requires the Department of Education to provide guidance and support for school entities. Allows school entities that adopt a policy to use funding to alleviate costs associated with planning, implementation or operation of a later school start time. Defines "department," "school entity" and "secondary school." Effective in 60 days.

Intro Date

01/21/2026

Actions

01/21/2026 H - Introduced

01/21/2026 H - Referred to House Education

Higher Ed Bill Actions

No Bill Actions this week.

Upcoming Events

TUESDAY – 01/27/2026

11:00 AM, Celebrating National School Choice Week

Press Conference, Main Capitol Rotunda

WEDNESDAY – 01/28/2026

12:00 PM, Solar for Schools

Press Conference, Main Capitol Rotunda

Press conference encouraging school districts to apply to the Department of Community and Economic Development's Solar for Schools program.

THURSDAY – 01/29/2026

10:00 AM, PA Schools Work

Press Conference, Main Capitol Rotunda

Press conference to include PA Schools Work campaign partners speaking on public school funding.

MONDAY – 02/02/2026

9:00 AM, Penn State Faculty Alliance

Press Conference, Main Capitol Rotunda

9:30 AM, [House Education](#)

Informational Meeting, Room 140, Main Capitol

Informational meeting to discuss and hear testimony from stakeholders and experts on the Future Ready PA Index and Student Outcomes.

MONDAY – 02/23/2026

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

Budget Hearing, Hearing Room 1, North Office Building

Budget Hearing with the Department of Education (PDE).

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

Budget Hearing, Hearing Room 1, North Office Building

Budget hearing with the Department of Education (PDE).

TUESDAY – 03/03/2026

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

Budget Hearing, Hearing Room 1, North Office Building

Budget hearing with state universities in Millersville, East Stroudsburg, West Chester and Indiana.

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

Budget Hearing, House Chamber

Budget hearing with the Department of Education (PDE).

WEDNESDAY – 03/11/2026

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

Budget Hearing, House Chamber

Budget hearing with the state-related universities.

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

Budget Hearing, House Chamber

Budget hearing with the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education (PASSHE) and community colleges.

In the News

[01/16/2026 - PA State Lawmakers and Agriculture Leaders Applaud the Signing of Federal Whole Milk for Healthy Kids Act](#)

[01/16/2026 - Pennsylvania Literacy Coalition Applauds State Board of Education for Major Step to Align Teacher Certification with the Science of Reading](#)

[01/21/2026 - Comparison of High School test scores 2015 to 2025](#)

[01/22/2026 - House Dems: State lawmakers celebrate, renew commitment to local schools](#)

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

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

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