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Bill Would Remove Confession Privileges for Child Abuse



Middletown Student to Lead



William Penn & Salesianum Advance to Championship

photo link: Delaware State Parks



Headlines

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BILL WOULD REMOVE CONFESSION PRIVILEGES FOR CHILD ABUSE

BY SAM HAUT

A new bill would remove the privileged secrecy that priests have in sacramental confession in cases related to child abuse or neglect. In response, the Diocese of Wilmington put out a statement that calls the idea “non-negotiable.”

House Bill 74 is sponsored by Rep. Eric Morrison, D-Glasgow, with 10 other Democrats and Republican Rep. Dave Wilson, R-Seafood, listed as additional sponsors and co-sponsors.

“The sacrament of confession and its seal of confession is a fundamental aspect of the church’s sacramental theology and practice,” the diocese said. “It is non-negotiable.”

“No Catholic priest or bishop would ever break the seal of confession under any circumstances. To do so would incur an automatic excommunication that could

only be pardoned by the pope himself. It would be a clear violation of the First Amendment for the government to interfere in this most sacred and ancient practice of our faith.

“While we support initiatives to make Delaware a safer place for minors and vulnerable adults, HB 74 would not contribute to such efforts in any meaningful way. Priests are already mandatory reporters under Delaware’s child abuse reporting law in all circumstances other than the sacrament of confession. Additionally, the Diocese of Wilmington’s own internal policies require all clergy to report suspected incidents of child abuse to civil authorities.”

Bob Krebs, communications director for the diocese, said that they do have a lobbyist in the legislature, but haven’t decided what they plan on doing to oppose the bill.



“There’s nothing that’s off the table,” he said. “We’re exploring all of our options now, but yeah it’s definitely something that’s very serious. We’ve already heard from a number of Catholics in the diocese about their disappointment that this is being proposed. We’re definitely going to be doing our best to make sure that the rights of the Catholics in Delaware are not cast aside in this manner.”

Vermont and **Utah** have both introduced bills that would remove the exemption for sacraments. Several states, including North Carolina, Oklahoma, Rhode Island, Texas and West Virginia, have passed legislation that doesn’t exempt sacraments from child abuse cases.

Since 1987, 190 similar bills have died in 33 state legislatures, according to the [Associated Press](#).



CHILD

CARE

KENT, SUSSEX CHILD CARE CENTERS MAY GET HIGHER DEL. PAYMENTS

BY SAM HAUT

A bill that would force the state to pay Kent and Sussex County child care programs the same fees that it pays New Castle ones seems headed to the Senate floor. No one spoke against [Senate Bill 59](#), sponsored by Sen. Kyle Evans Gay, D-Arden, when it came up Wednesday in the Senate Health & Social Services Committee.

Gay said it's important for children in Delaware that the bill pass.

"In order to expand child care services statewide, in order to build high quality environments, in order to invest early in our smallest Delawareans, we need to start by shoring up what we currently have," she said. "Making sure that providers can invest in classrooms, can invest in staff, that we can recruit staff, that we can do that statewide."

A bipartisan list of legislators, including Republican Minority Whip Brian Pettyjohn, R-Georgetown and

Senate Minority Leader Gerald W. Hocker, R-Ocean View, are co-sponsors.

The Senate "walks" its bills around for legislators to sign rather than taking a public vote and in late afternoon reported online that the bill passed with four favorable votes and two on its merits, meaning the voter thought it should be heard but didn't want to overtly support it. It has been assigned to the Finance Committee, which must pass it before heading to the Senate floor.

The bill focuses on a state program called purchase of care, which helps lower-earning workers pay for child care so they can continue to work.

It comes at a time when child care is a huge topic among employers who say a lack of affordable child care is keeping workers out of the job market. It also comes as the state seeks to increase the quality of child care services.

Several agencies in recent years have pointed out problems with availability of affordable child care, including the fact that the state program has been paying New Castle County child care more than it does Kent and Sussex.

According to a 2021 Delaware Cost of Care Study, the state purchase of care program pays an average of \$7,002 per student in Kent and Sussex counties, and \$7,147 in New Castle County.

The bill's fiscal note says the change would cost the state \$23,821,775 in the 2024 fiscal year, \$22,864,414 in the 2025 fiscal year, and \$24,007,634 in the 2026 fiscal year. It assumes that costs will increase by 5% every year.

CHILD CARE PROVIDERS REACT

During the hearing, 16 people spoke in support of the bill, including representatives of the YMCA of Delaware, the Delaware State Education Association and the Little School Kids Cottage.

Agencies such as the YMCA and the Boys and Girls Clubs are among those who accept purchase of care funds in their child care programs. Georganne Buccine, the vice president of youth development at the YMCA of Delaware, said children should have equal access to child care.

"A child in Kent and Sussex deserves the same support for positive educational outcomes as offered to their counterparts in the north," Buccine said. "They deserve the same quality care opportunities and experiences, regardless of location and regardless of income or race."

Taylor Hawk, director of Legislative and Political Strategy for the Delaware State Education Association, said the bill is needed to keep staffing levels high at child care facilities.

[READ MORE HERE](#)



BY JAREK RUTZ

A bill to stop nepotism in Wilmington City Council posts is headed to the full council next month.

Wilmington Councilman James Spadola introduced the legislation Monday night in the council's Finance & Economic Development Committee. The **ordinance** would prohibit members of the council from hiring close relatives of current council members.

"We should set up good guardrails for the employees and the system to operate, to prevent issues," Spadola told the committee, "and so the public knows that we're being good stewards of the taxpayer dollar."

The legislation was passed and is expected to be on the full council's April 6 agenda.

"Anybody who's currently on council staff, if they had a family member become elected into office, this would not affect them," Spadola said. "It does not include cousins, so anybody's cousin could get hired on council staff after passing this."

The ordinance defines a close relative as a person's domestic partner or parents, spouse, children, siblings by blood (whole or half), adoption or marriage.

WILM. CITY COUNCIL NEPOTISM LAW DRAWS DEBATE, MOVES ON

NEPOTISM ON THE CITY COUNCIL?

Spadola said that he isn't aware of any nepotism issues in the City Council, but he's seen those issues at the state level, although he didn't provide any examples Monday.

Committee member Zanthia Oliver pointed out one of the issues with convicted and ousted state auditor Kathleen McGuinness was that she hired her daughter.

"Sometimes, we as council members get involved with other issues that don't pertain to us," she said. "I don't know if I know of, or even ever heard of anyone that has been hired that have been immediate family to someone on City Council."

The ordinance is illogical because it legislates an issue that is not taking place, Oliver said. She said she was torn about the bill because many times children aspire to go into the business that their parents went into, whether it be law, politics, construction or another field. She pointed to a number of family-owned Delaware businesses that include generations of family members.

Oliver said she doesn't want to "stop someone who may have a dream, because that's all they've ever seen their family members do."

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photo link: [Out & About](#)

Culture

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DOMORE24 FINAL TALLY: \$2.3 MILLION FOR STATE NONPROFITS

BY SAM HAUT

DoMore24 Delaware raised \$2,371,592 from more than 15,000 donations from across the state and the country. That's down slightly from last year's nearly \$2.7 million in donations, but a 25% jump in the number of donors from around 12,000 last year.

Jennifer Saienni, director of nonprofit engagement at Spur Impact, who sponsor the event along with United Way of Delaware, said organizers prefer having more donors even if donations are lower. Those donors were being generous, she said.

"It's been a tough year for a lot of people," she said. "They still want to donate, still want to contribute. They know how important the nonprofit sector here is in Delaware. But they're just able to contribute at a different amount."

The top DoMore24 donations this year came to OperaDelaware, which received \$98,641, followed by

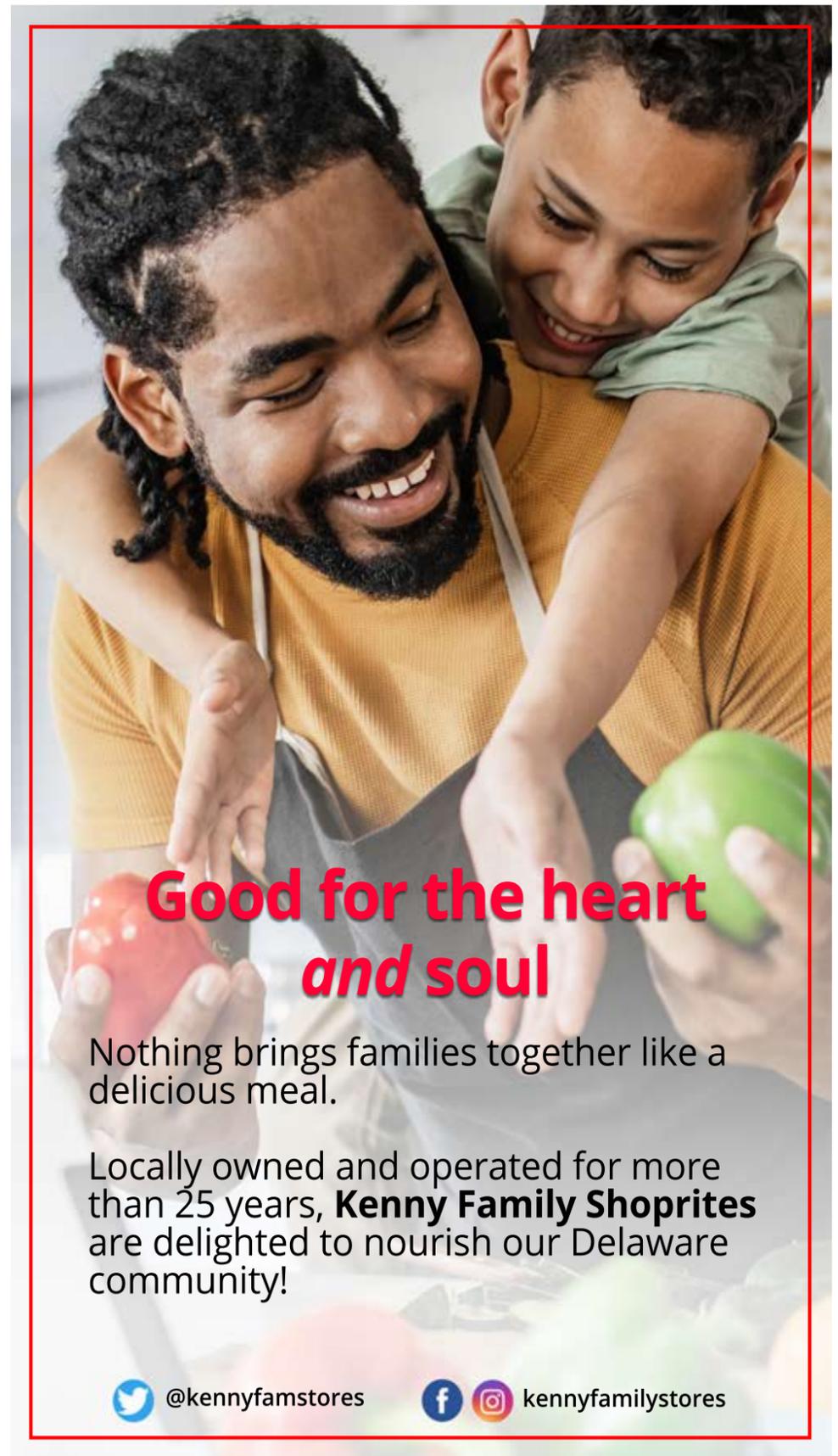
Barbara K. Brooks Transition House's \$67,960 and Shepherd's Office's \$56,880. Receiving the most number of donations was the Shepherd's Office with 638, followed by the Everett Theater's 607 and Barbara K Brooks Transition House's 540.

While most of the donations came from Delaware, 15,035, about 20% came from outside the state, with Pennsylvania providing the second-most donations at 1,599.

DOMORE24 AND COVID

Since starting in 2020, **Do More 24 Delaware** has raised more than \$7 million for state nonprofits. Saienni believes the COVID-19 pandemic still is having an impact on how much people donate. They have less cash, but appreciate nonprofits more, she said.

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PACKING 100,000 MEALS TOOK ABOUT 250 VOLUNTEERS, FIVE HOURS

BY BETSY PRICE

How fast can you package 100,000 meals to be shipped overseas? Pretty quickly, if a March 4 event in Georgetown was any indication.

Two shifts of workers managed to pack about 16,700 quart-size bags Saturday in Georgetown. Each pack will feed six people.

The rapid packing came courtesy of an assembly-line production set up in advance by [Rise Against Hunger](#) and the [Grace United Methodist Church](#) of Millsboro's Feeding the 5,000 Multiplied program.

Grace Church organized the event after deciding to open its annual [meal-packing](#) to the community, both in an effort to feed more people and to foster connections among neighbors. The church donated \$19,000 of the program's \$39,000 to buy the food and supplies

through Rise Against Hunger, a Philadelphia nonprofit. Those supplies had been moved into the cafeteria during driving rain on March 3, said organizer Mike Hall.

"Today, it's a matter of getting people in and then getting started," he said.

An assembly-line-style production had been set up before the 180 first-shift volunteers arrived at Sussex Central High School's cafeteria. The workers were asked to don red hair nets, creating a scene that looked like a crowd of lunch ladies had taken over.

The volunteers included young and old, students working off community service hours and groups from area churches, service clubs and businesses, including Mountaire, which donated \$12,000 to the event.

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photo credit: Vlada Karpovich / PEXELS

Business

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BY JAREK RUTZ

A Delaware country music star and a Bridgeville creamery are partnering to bring a new ice cream flavor to shelves across America. Jimmie Allen, who topped the music charts with his singles “Big Shot” and “Make Me Want To” in 2018 and **The Frozen Farmer** are introducing the new flavor inspired by his mother’s cooking.

Among his accolades are winning the **Country Music Association Award for New Artist of the Year** in 2018. Frozen Farmer became a celebrity business when it earned an investment from Lori Greiner in 2020 on ABC’s “Shark Tank.”

They plan a new ice cream flavor called “Miss Angie’s Peach Cobbler Frobert.” Allen, a Milton native who’s currently touring with Carrie Underwood, said he always loved eating his mom’s peach cobbler.

JIMMIE ALLEN, FROZEN FARMER PARTNER FOR NEW ICE CREAM FLAVOR

“Every kid has a story about when their mom or dad made that one thing that brought them comfort,” he said. “My momma’s peach cobbler takes me back to a time when we shared memories around the dinner table. It takes me home to Delaware.”

“We have peaches in Delaware, and peach cobbler is a popular southern dish, so with his mom’s famous recipe and our mission, this seemed like the perfect partnership all around,” said Katey Evans, founder and chief executive officer of the creamery.

Kroger has partnered with The Frozen Farmer to exclusively sell the frozen dessert in nearly 2,200 stores nationwide, according to Evans. This includes several of Kroger’s 19 affiliate stores. Those affiliates include Harris Teeter stores in Selbyville and Millsboro. The 370-calorie pints will sell from \$4.99 to \$6.49. But don’t worry—the new flavor won’t be a limited edition.

“We certainly plan to extend the partnership if everything proves successful into next year and beyond this,” Evans said.

She said the Frozen Farmer’s goal is to provide a crafted line of flavors utilizing fruit delivery services that stand by the company’s mission to reduce food waste. Kroger has committed to becoming a zero-food-waste company by 2025.

[READ MORE HERE](#)

An advertisement for Fur Baby Pet Resort. At the top, the logo features a silhouette of a dog and a cat with the text 'FUR BABY' and 'PET RESORT' below it. The main text reads 'DOGGIE DAYCARE IN MILFORD'. Below this is a dark blue button with the text 'LEARN MORE' and a paw print icon. The bottom half of the ad shows a woman in a green and white striped shirt sitting on a beach with a large white dog. At the bottom, the text reads 'We'll Keep Your Fur Baby Happy & Healthy!'

photo credit: Pixabay / PEXELS



Food & Dining

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MEET NICK'S PIZZA, A POP-UP PARLOR THAT'S A HIT

BY PAM GEORGE

Social media posts that tease “IYKYK” are wink-wink references to insider information—the acronym stands for If You Know You Know. Wilmington foodies are using the hashtag to refer to **Nick’s Pizza**, a pop-up started by Nick Vouras. The business has no brick-and-mortar restaurant, business phone or website. So, if you want to sample Vouras’s praise-worthy pizzas, you need to know when he’s selling them, how to order them and where to pick them up.

This is where IYKYK comes in: Vouras posts the week’s specials and the main menu on his Facebook and Instagram pages. Just type **@Nickspizza302** in your browser. Message or text him your order. (His number is on his social media posts.) A note on his Facebook pages says his pizzas will be available this month on March 14 and 30 at Mulrooney’s Tavern in Wilmington. Normal service will resume at the end of the month, the post says.

Starting at the end of the month, pizzas will be available on Nick’s normal schedule: Thursdays at Mulrooney’s and Friday (11 a.m.–6 p.m.), Saturday (10 a.m.–1 p.m.) and Sunday (10 a.m.–1 p.m.) at **Kozy Korner** in Wilmington’s Little Italy.

And there’s good reason for that Kozy Korner connection. “I was born there,” he quipped.

NATIVE SON

In reality, Vouras was born in Wilmington, but his

family has owned Kozy Korner since 1922. The original building stood at Delaware Avenue and Washington Street but was demolished in 1984 to make way for a hotel. In 1992, the restaurant reopened at Ninth and Union streets. John Vouras, Nick’s father, now operates the restaurant, and Nick started helping at age 12.

As a teen, Vouras didn’t realize how much he would miss his hometown until he went to California State at Northridge, a Los Angeles neighborhood.

“I missed the food from back home,” he recalled.

Specifically, he missed pizza, which is available on seemingly every corner in Delaware’s largest city.

The homesick student started watching online videos to learn how to make pizza, and when he decided to return to Wilmington, he got a job in a pizza restaurant to learn more about it.

THE RIGHT STUFF

Lacking a pizza oven, Vouras used Kozy Korner’s regular oven for his experiments. The most successful was the Detroit-style pizza, which suited the commercial equipment.

It’s an appropriate choice considering the pizza originated in Buddy’s Rendezvous, a former speakeasy that required a password.

[READ MORE HERE](#)



Government

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CATALYTIC CONVERTER THEFT FOCUS OF NEWLY FILED BILL

Wilmington, DE

Catalytic Converters
Philadelphia, PA

g37 coupe catalytic converters
Magnolia, NJ

BY SAM HAUT

A new bill filed in the General Assembly aims to put a dent in the sale of stolen catalytic converters by changing rules and increasing the penalty for stealing them. [House Bill 78](#), sponsored by Rep. Eric Morrison, D-Glasgow, would update the definition of catalytic converters, limit who is able to buy and sell them, increase the penalties for taking catalytic converters and require they be held for longer before being sold. Morrison was not immediately available for comment.

The bill has 10 co-sponsors, including nine Democrats and one Republican, Rep. Mike Ramone, R-Pike Creek. Ramone said he signed on partly because at least two family members and about four people at his fitness centers have had their catalytic converters stolen.

This bill will slow the resale process at salvage yards or other auto parts locations by requiring the buyers to wait 48 hours before paying a seller, he said.

“So a piece doesn’t go to a salvage yard and immediately gets recycled,” Ramone said. “It has to sit around, gotta log it in.”

The theft of catalytic converters is an issue nationally. The [National Insurance Crime Bureau](#) says it has increased because the price of the precious metals inside a converter—platinum, palladium or rhodium—has increased since 2020. According to the [Delaware State Police](#), catalytic converter theft has increased from 17 in 2016 to 1,071 in 2021.

Ramone said his only concern about the bill is that Delaware is such a small state people will take the converters out of state.

“But some of the surrounding states have similar informational processes,” he said. “A crook is always a crook and they’ll find a way to get around whatever we try to do, but at least we’ll slow them down and give the

police some tools.”

CATALYTIC CONVERTER THEFT

Thefts not only cost individuals, but all kinds of other organizations. School bus depots have to be on constant alert to guard against theft.

Red Clay Consolidated School District’s bus depot now has drivers working overnight shifts to deter thefts. So far, they haven’t caught anyone in action, but they’ve found three holes cut in the chain link fence surrounding one of their lots, which likely stopped the thefts, said Kelly Shahan, Red Clay’s transportation manager. She said she’s seen video from another bus yard of the thief laying down on a sled with wheels and propelling himself under a row of buses, snipping 10 converters loose in a few moments.

Ramone believes more people are stealing catalytic converters because of the rocky economy. The House minority leader blames it on runaway inflation, excessive increases in minimum wage and the state not having enough affordable day cares so they can join the workforce. That creates an environment where some people think it’s more beneficial to not work than it is to work, he said.

The subject of catalytic converters is not new to the state legislature. Last year, [House Bill 296](#) added catalytic converters to the list of items that scrap metal processors make a record of purchasing or otherwise acquiring. The goal of that bill also was to help combat the increase in catalytic converter thefts.

Ramone said he doesn’t know specifically what impact it had, but police are able to get more information when they go to salvage yards.

[READ MORE HERE](#)



DELAWARE HOUSE APPROVES MARIJUANA TAX BILL

BY SAM HAUT

The Delaware House of Representatives on Thursday passed a bill that creates a tax system for legal marijuana in the state. [House Bill 2](#), which passed 27-13, is a companion bill to [House Bill 1](#), which was passed by the House days before, and would legalize marijuana. HB2 next goes to the Senate. Gov. John Carney **vetoed** a similar bill last year.

Rep. Edward Osienski, D-Newark, is the sponsor for HB 2 and is joined by 30 other senators and representatives, all Democrats. Sen. Nicole Poore, D-Delaware City, is the only new sponsor from the group that sponsored HB 1.

HB 2 would tax marijuana similar to how alcohol is taxed. It would also set up a marijuana commissioner, appointed by the governor and confirmed by the Senate.

FOLLOW THE MONEY TRAIL ON MARIJUANA TAXES

The bill also includes social equity licenses, which would provide marijuana licenses at a 40% discount to applicants who either were convicted of a marijuana offense, were married to someone convicted of a marijuana offense or have lived in a disproportionately impacted area for at least five years.

According to the fiscal notes for the bill, it would cost in 2024 \$1,913,971 in a one-time cost and \$2,201,225 for the general fund. In 2025, it would cost \$1,241,459 for the general fund, \$129,000 for an appropriated special fund and \$2,470,510 for a marijuana regulation fund. In 2026, it would cost \$1,282,608 for the general fund, \$194,000 for an appropriated special fund and \$2,513,782 for a marijuana regulation fund.

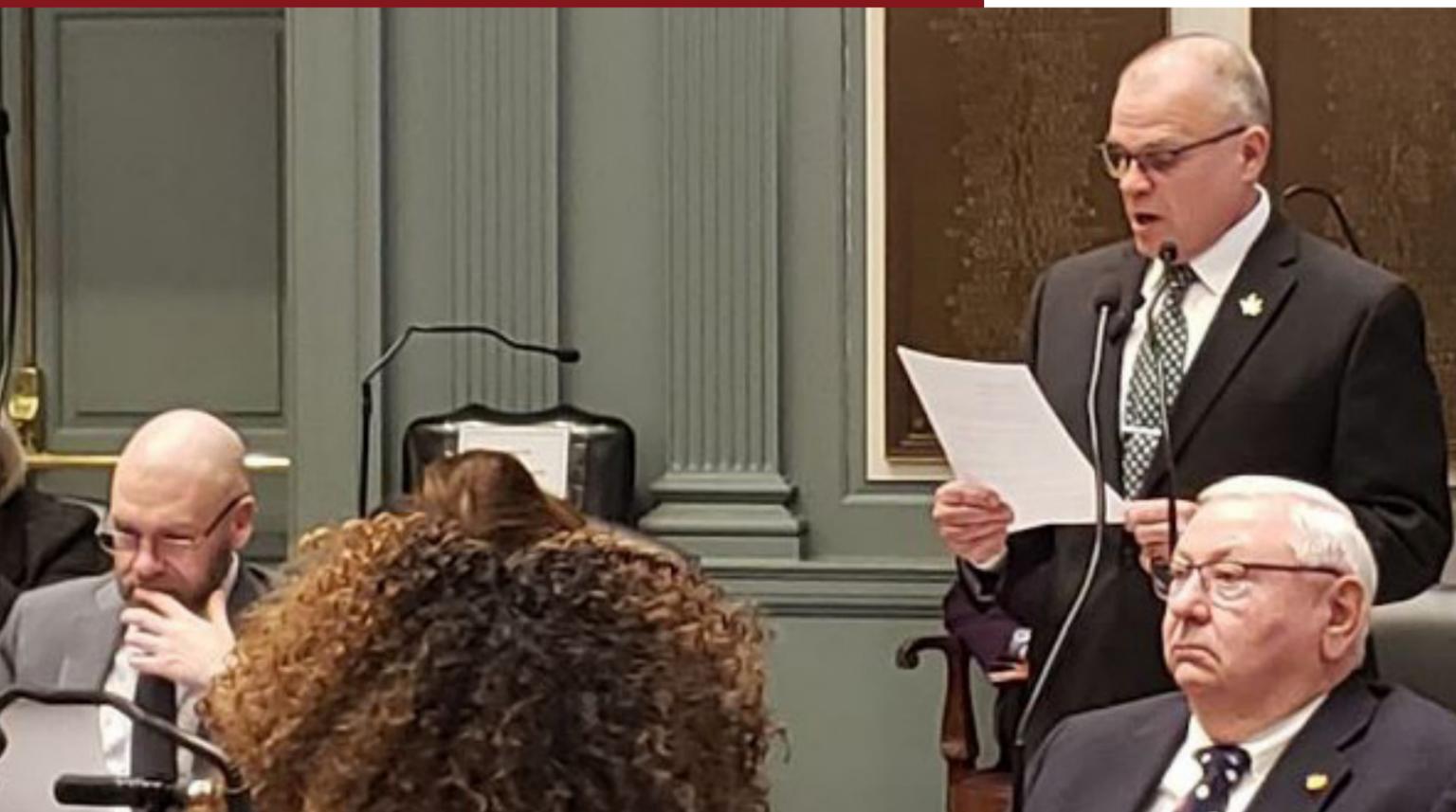
According to the fee impact, it would take a minimum of 13 months after the signing of the bill for various fees that the bill will impose to be collected. Marijuana stores, marijuana testing facilities, marijuana cultivation facilities and marijuana production facilities would all pay \$10,000 fees every two years.

The fee impact estimates nothing generated in 2024, a minimum of \$925,000 generated in 2025 and assumes no more money from licenses until they are renewed in 2027.

Money from the fees will be placed into a marijuana regulation fund, which will go to the costs of the marijuana commissioner and the Division of Alcohol and Tobacco Enforcement, to cover some costs for the Department of Justice. And 7% of marijuana tax money will be put into a justice reinvestment fund.

The House also approved two amendments to the bill by voice vote, one that makes various technical corrections and another that makes more corrections put forth by the governor, including preventing marijuana from being consumed while at a marijuana testing facility or retail store.





MARIJUANA LEGALIZATION BILL PASSES HOUSE, SENT TO SENATE

recreational marijuana by anyone under 21 would still result in a civil penalty. Several Republican reps questioned the wisdom of the move.

MARIJUANA USE QUESTIONS

Rep. Ruth Briggs King, R-Georgetown, asked Osienski about the impact that marijuana has on infants and fetuses. Osienski said that there are around 88,000 deaths per year due to alcohol but none associated with marijuana. Use among children in high school decreased from 2020 to 2021.

Briggs King pointed out that use of cannabis is associated with an increased risk of car accidents and that there's a danger of kids eating cannabis gummies because they look like candy.

Rep. Jeff Hilovsky, R-Millsboro, said that the bill would lead to increased costs for police and that more people could be disqualified from drug tests.

Osienski answered that many members of law enforcement already have some experience in the specific kind of marijuana testing that would be required. He points out that legalizing marijuana will free up around 12,000 civil charges that the state would otherwise have to investigate and prosecute.

Richard Henderson, former president of the Medical Society of Delaware testified that he had concerns about the bill because of the lack of studies done on the impact of marijuana on the development of children. Henderson said that the concentration of THC in marijuana today is three times what it was 30 years ago and that three longitudinal studies show that marijuana use has a detrimental impact on brain development. Osienski asked Henderson what level of exposure would lead to the type of brain damage mentioned in the studies and Henderson said he isn't sure.

Helping propel House Bill 1 out of the House were Rep. William Bush, D-Cheswold, who voted against the bill in 2022 but voted for it this time around, and Rep. Stephanie Bolden, D-Wilmington, who had been absent during voting in 2022, but voted yes Tuesday.

BY SAM HAUT

The Delaware House of Representatives on Tuesday once again sent a bill to legalize the use of marijuana in the First State to the Senate, this time on a 28 to 13 vote. **House Bill 1** is sponsored yet again by Rep. Edward Osienski, D-Newark, who managed to get a similar bill passed last year, only to see it vetoed by Gov. John Carney and then fail to get enough House votes to override the veto. The bill is part of a two-part package. **House Bill 2-HA 1** would create a pot-growing and selling industry in Delaware.

Osienski has said that he hopes the growing public demand for decriminalization will help encourage Carney to sign the measure into law.

House Bill 1 would remove all penalties for possession of a personal use quantity of marijuana, except for those who are under 21. A personal use quantity would be defined as one ounce or less of leaf marijuana, 12 grams or less of concentrated cannabis, or cannabis products containing 750 milligrams or less of delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol. Under current state law, the possession of one ounce or less of marijuana by a person 21 years of age and older carries a civil penalty of \$100. That provision would be eliminated under HB 1. Possession, use or consumption of

[READ MORE HERE](#)



STATE POLICE MAY GET SPECIAL TAGS TO MARK 100TH ANNIVERSARY

BY JAREK RUTZ

A bill that would create a special license plate for the Delaware State Police to celebrate the division’s 100th anniversary was sent to the House floor Wednesday.

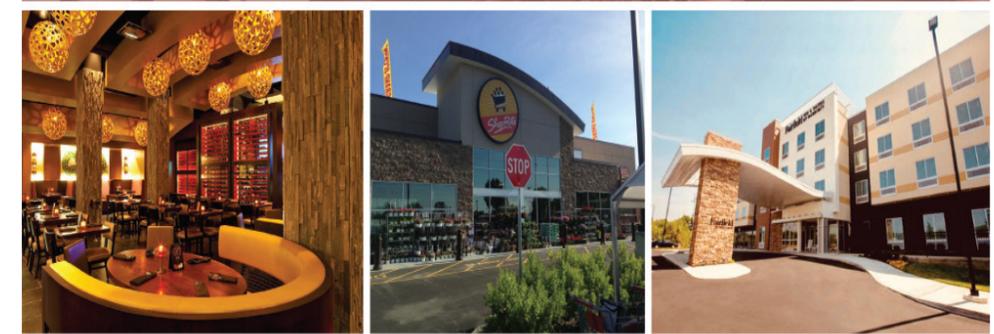
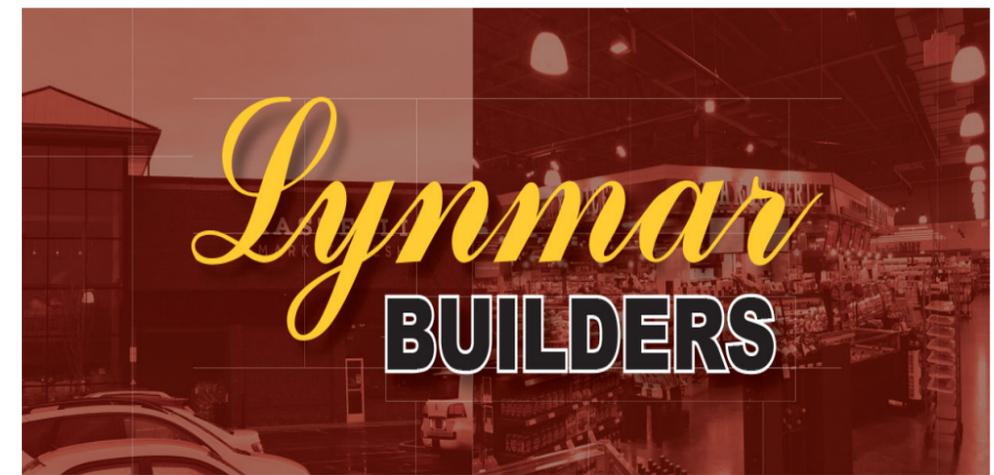
House Bill 100, deliberately named for the anniversary, unanimously passed the House Administration Committee.

The plates would be granted only to active Delaware State Police officers at the discretion of the Col. Melissa Zebley, superintendent of the State Police. She is the first woman to head the department.

“Our State Police have enhanced the safety and security of citizens across our entire state for the past 100

years,” said House Minority Leader Mike Ramone, R-Pike Creek South. “I am proud to support this initiative to allow them a special license plate noting and honoring their service.”

The bill will require officers to pay a one-time fee of \$10 for the unique plate that will be provided by the Division of Motor Vehicles. Each plate will have the prefix “ST” and will be numbered consecutively beginning with “2.”



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FORMER WILM. POLICE CORPORAL CONVICTED OF MISCONDUCT, LYING

BY SAM HAUT

A former Wilmington police officer has been convicted of misconduct and making false statements to law enforcement. James MacColl, who was a corporal, was charged in March 2021 after a shooting on Feb. 2, 2019, according to a press release from the Delaware Department of Justice.

MacColl responded to a 911 call of an armed carjacking, where he shot Yahim Harris twice in the upper left torso, according to court records. During a use of force investigation, a ballistics analysis said the bullets fired by MacColl didn't match the barrel of his service weapon. The service weapon would have had five distinct markings, but the bullet had six. The Department of Justice concluded that MacColl was justified in shooting Harris, but noted the discrepancy.

MacColl initially said he did not change the gun barrel and did not explain how the discrepancy occurred. But in January 2020, he admitted changing the five-twist barrel on his service weapon to an after-market six-twist in 2017. Due to MacColl's "total lack of candor," prosecutors were forced to drop the then-pending charges against Harris for the alleged carjacking, the press release said.

MacColl will be sentenced later. The maximum sentence he could receive would be three years, said Mat Marshall, public information officer for the Department of Justice.

"At the absolute minimum, we should be able to expect honesty from those we trust to enforce the law,"



Delaware Attorney General Kathy Jennings said in the press release.

This was MacColl's second use of force **investigation**. His actions were reviewed following the shooting of Jeremy McDole on Sept. 23, 2015. McDole was a 28-year-old African American paraplegic who was shot and killed by police in Wilmington as he sat in his wheelchair. Neither MacColl, nor three other officers, have been charged in that shooting. They were answering a call about a man with a gun.





Education

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LEARNING COLLAB EXTENDS DIRECTOR APPLICATION INDEFINITELY

BY JAREK RUTZ

With only seven applicants for executive director, the Wilmington Learning Collaborative council voted Thursday to extend the application deadline indefinitely. It was to have ended by March 23, with the post being filled by June 1.

The council also discussed whether to alert the current applicants that the deadline was being extended, whether to post the job ad in **Education Week** and hiring a nonprofit advisor to help them write bylaws and learn to run meetings well.

The **Learning Collaborative** is a partnership created in November 2022 to help Wilmington children in nine city elementary schools serving about 2,8000 across Brandywine, Red Clay and Christina school districts. It hopes to create consistency for students, empower educators, school leaders and communities, and improve outcomes for students with better test scores, less absenteeism and higher graduation rates. To do that it

also plans to connect families with social services to address issues like homelessness, poverty and hunger.

Councilman Don Patton said it was important that the council didn't "hire someone just to hire someone."

"Some of this plays on the number of people who apply and the quality of the people who apply," he said.

Council members also said they wanted more regional and national candidates to apply. Extending the application deadline could help draw regional or even national applicants, Patton said.

Council member Lincoln Hohler, who is also superintendent of Brandywine School District, suggested using some of the Collaborative's \$10 million budget on advertising.

"It's \$2,200 to post in the national top jobs for Ed Week for superintendents position, and it's \$1,395 for a director's position," Hohler said.

[READ MORE HERE](#)



URSULINE ACADEMY

REGISTER TO ATTEND A FALL OPEN HOUSE!

Upper School | October 3
 Lower & Middle | November 11



MIDDLETOWN STUDENT TO LEAD BUSINESS PROFESSIONALS OF AMERICA

BY JAREK RUTZ

Middletown High School junior Jennae Overton has been selected by the **Business Professionals of America** to serve as the president of

the 2023-2024 State Officer Leadership Team.

Overton believes she was a great candidate for the presidential role because of her involvement in her school newspaper, **Future Farmers of America**, golf and the Black Student Union.

“Newspaper taught me to be accurate with my information and timely, FFA taught me countless leadership and public speaking skills I will always carry with me, golf taught me to be patient, not only with my surroundings but with myself,” she said, “and the Black Student Union taught me to speak up for what is right always.”

She said those are all important qualities that she should have not only as a president, but as a human being.

With her on the leadership team will be Vice President Kinga Gul from **Newark Charter High School**, Secretary Manushri Gupta from **MOT Charter High School** and Anusha Sarwadi from **Alfred G. Waters Middle School**, who will be the middle school rep. The

nominations come after last month’s state leadership conference at the Chase Center in Wilmington.

There, more than 350 high school business students from 20 high schools competed in 52 events in management, marketing and communications, digital communications and design, management information systems, business administration and finance. And 260 business students from 20 middle schools statewide competed in 15 events. Students also campaigned for the state officer leadership team.

“In January I submitted my official application and then the ball really started to roll from there,” Overton said. “We had to submit speeches for review, a video showing why we would make a good candidate, as well as a headshot, and there was a candidate meeting where we all got to meet one another and some members of the state staff.”

The team represents the students of Delaware BPA and plans the fall leadership conference as well as the state leadership conference.

“We do so many other things too, like visiting industry partners and representing the Delaware BPA members at the national leadership conference,” she said.





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GEORGETOWN MIDDLE'S INTERVENTION SCORECARDS HELP 200 STUDENTS

BY JAREK RUTZ

Jessica Mariner can see how her seventh-grade son Karson has made academic and behavioral strides in the two months he's been participating in **Georgetown Middle School's** intervention program.

"He used to give up right away and call himself dumb, and I would never know if he had homework unless I asked him," Mariner said. "He flourishes off of positive reinforcement, and he now comes home with a mission to complete his homework every night."

The Indian River School District started its Behavior Tiered Intervention Support three years ago. At the start of the 2021-22 school year, it opened a student success suite for the kids who were in the program. Georgetown Middle School Principal David Hudson said it took about a year for teachers and students to buy into the program run by Tabitha Cortijo.

She already has worked with 193 students this year, up a few students from the previous year.

"My favorite part of this job is relationship building, which is the biggest part of these interventions," Cortijo said. "A lot of the students I work with have trust issues, and they have certain behaviors because they're not able to maybe talk about things or work on it themselves, or they just haven't had a trusting adult to help them."

Mariner, a single mother, said her son never had a male role model. Karson also has a learning disability that can't be treated because all the medications for it cause his blood pressure to rise, his mom said.

"He's pretty great socially but he sometimes struggles academically and he gets frustrated easily and shuts down quickly and stops believing in himself," Mariner said.

In January, at Karson's individualized education program meeting, which outlines how the school will try to help Karson achieve his goals, Mariner decided it was time to have her son join the intervention program.

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Karson refused to go to his first intervention meeting, but after talking to Cortijo, something clicked, Mariner said. Now her son looks forward to filling out his scorecard and achieving his intervention goals.

"Miss C's energy and attitude is so uplifting to the students and what she has to offer is rewarding for not just my son but other kids," Mariner said. "It keeps them motivated, and as a parent who's not with him for seven hours a day, that's so important."

Every day, Cortijo meets with about 15 students, either individually or in group settings.

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BILL TO FOSTER MENTORING IN SCHOOLS DRAWS BIPARTISAN SUPPORT

BY JAREK RUTZ

A bill that would establish a 15-person task force to focus on mentoring and improving literacy rates for Delaware's youth unanimously passed the House Education Committee Wednesday.

"We believe that the 18,222 children in charter schools across our state benefit not just from the educators in the building, but from the village that helps educate them," said Kendall Massett, executive director of the [Delaware Charter Schools Network](#). "Mentors are a huge part of that."

[House Joint Resolution 1](#), sponsored by education committee chairs Rep. Kim Williams, D-Marshallton, and Sen. Laura Sturgeon, D-Hockessin, says the task force will mainstream public school mentoring systems. "It will look at ways that the state could expand the

number of mentors, and improve the use of information technology to make improvements to recruitment, training and retention of mentors," Williams said.

This might include a single statewide website for school mentoring and necessary infrastructure that will be needed to run a top-quality mentoring program, she said.

Rep. Mike Smith, R-Pike Creek, told the committee that he and his wife have been mentoring two young boys. One experienced a rather traumatic divorce, Smith said.

"He comes over three nights a week and we play, we do homework together, we do schoolwork together," Smith said, "and he's now a stud baseball player and now he's able to play on the baseball team because he

got his grades up."

Smith said the other child has a background similar to himself, with a family consumed by drug addiction.

"I just encourage everybody to step up and look to see in their own groups and their own communities what people are going through," Smith said. "Give your time when you can."

If the bill passed, it would include:

- two members of the House of Representatives—one member of the majority party who is appointed by the speaker of the house, and one member of the minority party who is appointed by the House minority leader.
- two members of the Senate—one member of the majority party who is appointed by the president pro tempore of the Senate, and one member of the minority party who is appointed by the Senate minority leader.
- the governor.
- the secretary of education.
- the secretary of the Department of Services for Children, Youth, and their Families.
- the secretary of the Department of Safety and Homeland Security.
- the secretary of the Department of Technology and Information.
- a representative of the governor's Advisory Council on Exceptional Citizens.
- a representative of the Delaware Association of School Administrators, nominated by the association's president.

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BILL CALLS FOR MEDICAID TO REIMBURSE DOULA SERVICES

BY SAM HAUT

House Majority Whip Rep. Melissa Minor-Brown is back with another bill on requiring Medicaid to pay for doulas. Doulas provide physical and emotional support while a woman is giving birth.

House Bill 80, which requires doula services to be covered by Medicaid starting Jan. 1, has 15 other sponsors: 14 Democrats and Republican Sen. Bryant Richardson, R-Laurel.

House Bill 343, sponsored by Minor-Brown last year, required officials to craft a plan for coverage of doula services by Medicaid providers. It passed with no one voting against it.

While there hasn't been a fiscal note released for HB 80 yet, a Division of Medicaid and Medical Assistance report showed it would cost the state \$51,325 in service costs and \$250,000 in a one-time system cost in 2024.

“Doulas are an important part of how we can address pregnancy-related mortality, and requiring Medicaid to provide this coverage will ensure that every parent who wants to use a doula will have access to one,” Minor-Brown said in a release.

All carriers would be required under the bill to cover doula services for three prenatal visits of up to 90 minutes, three postpartum visits of up to 90 minutes and attendance through labor and birth.

FULL-TIME DOULAS?

The bill also requires the state Division of Medicaid and Medical Assistance to establish a certification process for doulas and to set a reimbursement rate for doula services which, according to the bill, “supports a livable annual income for full-time practicing doulas.”

“A lot of doulas are not full-time doulas. I would love to get to the point where we could have full-time doulas because it’s so needed,” Minor-Brown said. “So hopefully, looking at these reimbursements that Delaware is providing, we can allow for more doulas to take on a larger client load and maybe that would be sustainable for them. And if not, then we have to come back and look at how we may need to change that.”

“When I talked to private insurances, they are ready and prepared to take this on,” Minor-Brown said. “So you will see some legislation coming down the pipe for that because it’s needed. So I’ve already seen a ton of names jump on as sponsors, so I’m hoping that it gains unanimous support. To me it just makes sense.”

The bill has been assigned to the House Health & Human Development Committee, but a hearing date has not yet been set. Minor-Brown hopes to have it brought up at the committee by next week.





WEIGHT-LOSS DRUGS TO BE ADDED TO STATE INSURANCE PLANS

BY SAM HAUT

Delaware will cover new weight loss medications for state employees. The Delaware State Employee Benefit Committee unanimously approved a plan that would include the drugs as well part of a program that includes utilization management and behavior modification programs. It was unclear when the move would take effect.

Adding the drugs to state employee and retiree health plans will cost an extra \$1.8 million, as opposed to simply approving the use of the drugs, which would cost an extra \$2.8 million, the committee was told Monday.

The drugs, under the brand names of Victoza, Saxenda, Ozempic, Rybelsus, Wegovy and Tirzepatide, have become a nationwide sensation. Many started as drugs to help diabetics lower their blood sugar, but were so effective and popular that they have been approved for weight loss alone.

The utilization management programs will require previous participation in a weight management program as well as use of a reduced calorie diet and exercise.

Obesity rates have increased in the U.S. during the pandemic and more than 40% of **adults** in the U.S. are obese, the committee was told.

At last month's meeting, public commenters asked the state to approve the drugs. If not, some said, at least take them off the list of banned prescription drugs. That would allow people to negotiate with their insurers. Several other states, including New York, New Jersey, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Virginia, North Carolina, Georgia, currently provide coverage for weight loss medication, while Florida is undergoing a pilot program for medication.

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WILLIAM PENN, SALESIANUM ADVANCE TO BOYS' CHAMPIONSHIP

BY NICK HALLIDAY

William Penn and Salesianum both won their semifinal games to advance to the DIAA boys' state championship tonight (Saturday) at the Bob Carpenter Center.

William Penn entered the night as the lowest seed at No. 7, but it knew it belonged. They reached the semis by knocking off the No. 2 seed Seaford Blue Jays on their home court. They were set to face off with a familiar opponent in the No. 3 seed, Howard Wildcats. The two teams faced off earlier in the year as the Wildcats were able to edge the Colonials by two points, 58-56. This time the Colonials were ready to avenge the regular season loss.

The two teams were tied after one quarter, but the Colonials were able to outscore the Wildcats the rest of the way, to come away with a 55-39 win. Jaiden Guy paced William Penn, scoring 20 points and hitting eight of his 10 free throw attempts. Emmanuel Vonhm added 10 points to go along with nine rebounds. Howard was led by Jameer DeShields who totaled 11 points while Ayden Richards-Powell added nine.

The second game of the night featured the No. 1 seed Middletown Cavaliers who were set to face off with the No. 5 seed Salesianum Sals. These teams were also familiar with each other, having faced off earlier in the

season with Sals handing the Cavaliers their only in-state loss of the season.

In this game, the score was rarely ever not within a one-possession game. This game came down to the very last seconds. Salesianum took possession of the ball with just around 50 seconds left in the game tied at 49. After running the clock down to eight seconds, Isaiah Hynson drove in the lane and sent up a floater that touched nothing but the bottom of the net, to take a 51-49 lead with just four seconds left in the game. Middletown took a timeout and drew up a play, but was unsuccessful on the half court heave as time expired.

The Sals were led by Hynson who scored 18 points, shooting 7-of-12 and 3-for-3 from beyond the arc. Kareem Thomas added 12 points and Justin Hinds added 11. Howard was led by Jaiden McGhee and Amir Cunningham, who each added 12 points a piece.

William Penn and Salesianum did play each other this season. Penn came away with the win at home by a score of 75-63. The two teams have never faced off before in a state championship. Williams Penn's last championship came in 2009, with a 67-54 win over Caesar Rodney. Salesianum's last championship was in 2015, as it defeated Polytech 52-45.

These two teams will face off tonight (Saturday) at 6 p.m. at the Bob Carpenter Center. Tickets are on sale on the Blue Hens event site. If you can not get tickets the game will be live streamed on the NFHS Network.

[READ MORE HERE](#)



SANFORD DEFEATS URSULINE FOR STATE CHAMPIONSHIP

BY NICK HALLIDAY

In front of a packed house Friday night at the Bob Carpenter Center, Sanford and Ursuline took the court against each other for the first time since 2019. Ursuline was able to defeat Sanford that year, but this year was a different story. The Sanford Warriors were able to hold off Ursuline en route to winning the 2023 DIAA girls' state championship.

Sanford was able to jump out early on Ursuline, scoring the first nine points of the game. However, Ursuline was able to make its own run, reeling off eight straight points of its own. Sanford then outscored 8-2 to close out the first quarter on a deep three by Azareya (Zy) Kilgoe at the buzzer.

In the second quarter, Sanford's Dallas Pierce was able to carry the offense to maintain the lead into half. Pierce was perfect from the floor in the quarter, going 3-for-3 from the floor and 2-of-2 from behind the arc, scoring eight points. Sanford was able to take a 10-point lead into the half by a score of 30-20.

Coming out of the half, Sanford was able to keep the momentum going by expanding its lead to 40-29 with just over two minutes left in the quarter. Ursuline was able to answer back, again outscoring Sanford 7-2 behind a big three from Emma Anthony and a couple of layups from Taylor Brown and Jezelle (GG) Banks, that cut the lead to 42-36 to end the quarter.

Ursuline carried that momentum into the fourth quarter. Anthony got things started by hitting her second three-pointer of the game, right in front of the Ursuline bench that caught her as she fell. A minute later, GG did the same as she drained a three pointer of her own right in front of the bench as well. Those big threes brought the game to within two points at 44-42. After a timeout, Banks drove to the basket, making a nice scooping layup to tie the game at 44 the first time since the start of the game at 0-0.

After the two teams exchanged buckets to tie the game at 46, Sanford then took over the game to hold off the young Ursuline Raiders. Sanford was able to keep Ursuline scoreless for the last three minutes of the game. As time started to run out, Ursuline had to foul to try to conserve time, but Sanford was clutch from the free throw line going a perfect 8-of-8 to close out the game. Pierce went a perfect 4-of-4 and on her fourth free throw she made the 1,000th point of her career. Sanford scored the last 12 points of the game to close out the victory with a 58-46 victory.

Pierce led Sanford with a game-high 24 points going 8-of-12 from the floor, 3-of-3 from behind the arc and 5-of-5 from the free throw line. When she was asked what the game plan was she said "defense, defense, defense"; however it seems it was her offense with stats like she posted in the biggest game of the year. Jada Snow and Kilgoe also added double figure points for Sanford with 13 and 12, respectively.

Ursuline was led by Banks who scored 15 points, while Brown and Bolden each added eight.

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