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Myers Sets Records for DelTech Softball



photo link: Longwood Gardens



Headlines

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HEATED DEBATE ENDS IN VOTE TO RAISE TEACHER PAY OVER FOUR YEARS

BY JAREK RUTZ

Defying the demands of the state teachers union, a committee formed to make recommendations on educator pay voted Monday to bring teacher's starting salary to \$60,000 over four years rather than three. The four-year plan will consist of a 2% salary increase and a flat dollar increase of \$1,875 to the base salary for teachers, nurses and administrators each year until it reaches \$60,000 in the 2027-2028 school year.

The argument over the three- or four-year spread grew heated between Cerron Cade, the director of the Office of Management and Budget, and the Delaware State Education Association, which represents teachers and other educators. The union wants raises faster, saying the state needs them to compete with rising salaries in other states. OMB wants to spread raises out to be more accommodating to the state budget.

"This is kind of embarrassing at this point, and I'm not really sure where we're supposed to go from here," said Rep. Mike Smith, R-Pike Creek during the Public Education Compensation Committee's meeting. "I'm just going to go not voting because I don't even feel com-

fortable at this point that we're gonna get anywhere."

His comment came after Stephanie Ingram, president of the DSEA, insisted that the committee needs to bump starting salaries to \$60,000 through a three-year timeline. Maryland recently passed legislation that would bring the starting salaries of teachers to \$60,000 by July 1, 2026. Ingram has pushed for months for the committee to recommend the three-year plan in order to keep the state on pace with Maryland's law.

"Our recommendation needs to be bold. Our recommendation needs to be one that ensures that we keep pace within our region," Ingram said.

The committee needs to make a decision to put its students and educators first, she said, or the state is going to find itself again in a position where it can't compete with surrounding states.

"We need to commit to our students' future and ensure that all of Delaware's classrooms are as fully staffed and up and running as soon as we possibly can," Ingram said.

She and Sen. Laura Sturgeon, D-Hockessin, voted against the four-year plan.

"This committee's charge is to make a recommendation that we think will make our schools attractive to educators...since there's a shortage of teachers," Sturgeon said. "It is not to figure out how to pay for it. That is the job of the JFC [Joint Finance Committee]."

Phasing it in over four years means Delaware will continue to languish in hiring and retention, which ultimately hurts students, she said.

Committee member Cade, who is the director of the Office of Management and Budget, adamantly disagreed.

"It's hard for me to make a recommendation without factoring in whether or not it is a realistic recommendation that can be achieved," Cade said.

"If that were the case then there would be no reason to have any years on it because it would be somebody else's job to figure out how to fund it," he said. "So why even have any years phased in? Why not just do it all year one?"

The committee needs to attach some timeline to the plan because it's not realistic without one, Cade said.

"I don't necessarily agree with the idea that it's not our responsibility to factor that into our decision making," he said.

Cade also pointed out that even though the bottom line for the three-year plan and four-year plan is only a difference of \$125,000, adopting the three-year plan would cost the state around \$11 million more each fiscal year.

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DOVER SENATOR: BILLS PUSHED THROUGH ASSEMBLY TOO FAST

BY JAREK RUTZ

A Dover state senator says too many bills are being pushed through the General Assembly too quickly and it's not a great way to govern. That doesn't leave time for thoughtful debate or even for the public to talk to their own representatives about how they feel, said Eric Buckson, R-Dover. He was elected to the Senate last November, beating longtime Sen. Colin Bonini after serving on the Kent County Levy Board.

"If you're going to make a change that impacts all Delawareans in a significant way, good or bad, there needs to be an opportunity, I think, for constituents to be brought into the mix and allowed to share their thoughts with their elected officials," Buckson said.

"To say, well they can show on less than 24 hours notice to a hearing, I think it doesn't speak to transparency. It doesn't speak to good governance."

Not everyone agrees.

Sen. Brian Pettyjohn, R-Georgetown, said he had not discussed the issue with Buckson but doesn't think the time it takes for bills to go from committee to floors is too quick.

"There are some pieces of legislation that have to be moved quickly for whatever reason. We have processes in place for that," Pettyjohn said. "It doesn't happen all the time...and that's something about Delaware. If there's legislation that needs to be moved quickly from committee to the floor, it can happen and the committee process is there to garner the public input."

Senate Majority Leader Bryan Townsend, D-Newark, said in a written statement that Democrats will work to pass more legislation.

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HOUSE RESOLUTION WOULD DECLARE ATHEIST DAY IN DELAWARE

BY SAM HAUT

A recently circulated General Assembly resolution would designate March 23 as National Atheist Day in Delaware. Sponsored by Rep. Eric Morrison, D-Glasgow and Sen. Laura Sturgeon, D-Hockessin, the resolution doesn't yet have a bill number. Efforts were not successful to reach Morrison for comment.

Sturgeon said she grew up and remains Catholic, but believes in philosopher Søren Kierkegaard's leap of faith, which he describes as a person having trust in something despite the lack of logic, reason and rationality. The resolution will be an interesting litmus test for the Christian politicians in the legislature, she said.

"It'll be really interesting to see how the openly Christian elected officials, the ones that I'm familiar with more in my chamber in the Senate...respond to this resolution," Sturgeon said. "And I think how they

respond to the resolution will again give insight into why a resolution like this is an important conversation starter...if they're reluctant, then again it only underscores why the resolution is needed."

There's no reason legislators should refuse to pass this resolution, she said. The legislature has no problem having a prayer said and reciting the Pledge of Allegiance before each session.

"Almost 95% of the time it is a Christian prayer. It's overtly a Christian prayer," Sturgeon said. "And nobody balks, and everybody is supportive and everybody bows their head and most, as far as I can tell, say amen at the end....It seems rather stingy for anyone to have a problem supporting one day to honor the many good and loving atheists in the world."

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Culture

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GAMING, SOCIAL MEDIA CAN HELP SET UP KIDS FOR GAMBLING ISSUES

BY BETSY PRICE

With the advent of March Madness and the NCAA's national basketball tournament comes an avalanche of flashy ads for websites encouraging people to bet on games. But if you think that's the first time a child is exposed to the evils of a modern world bent on addicting youth to gambling, think again, says John Schmidt, the prevention services coordinator for youth at the Delaware Council on Gambling Problems.

For many young people, that grooming starts with monetized video games like Candy Crush or Farmville and the emotional rewards of social media apps like Facebook, Snapchat and Instagram. All of them encourage behaviors that pave the superhighway to gambling, says Schmidt. In games, the microtransactions often offer the promise of something that will be more lucrative than the money spent.

Games have changed in the last decade, he agreed. Games once could be bought for a flat fee and played until they were solved without spending another penny. Now most can be downloaded for free, but require purchases to move ahead when players want better tools, better costumes, even additional playing time.

The purchases more directly relatable to gambling are microtransactions in games that offer kids "loot boxes" for a fee. Many times, the kids don't know what's in loot boxes but are hoping for a valuable tool or weapon. That's a form of gambling, Schmidt said.

"So what's happening is more and more kids are spending more and more money trying to open these in hopes of winning valuable items," Schmidt said. "There is no difference between that mechanically and buying a scratch-off. It's the exact same thing. It's just virtual. It

just looks different. And it's creating the same responses in the brain that any gambling activity actually would."

The backlash against loot boxes is strong enough that when Overwatch, a popular game, came out with a new version, the makers themselves had removed loot boxes, Schmidt said. Kids who play card games like Pokemon can suffer the same kind of emotional reactions as gamblers when they buy a deck of cards hoping to find a powerful card, he pointed out.

With social media, he said, "You just get caught up in the zone, you're focused, you're isolated and you're seeking rewards, and sometimes you're even seeking things like attention, affection and validation, which is sort of another conversation, but it's one that I have in the classroom with kids."

In Delaware, nearly 44% of youth surveyed in middle and high schools admit to having gambled in the past year, according to the council. Yet, 66% of parents have never talked to their kids about gambling.

"We know that kids who are introduced to gambling by the age of 12 are four times more likely to develop a gambling problem," Schmidt said. "We want parents to understand that what seems so harmless, a simple card or skill game, can—for some children—lead to a dangerous gambling addiction."

SIGNS OF GAMBLING TROUBLE

Jennifer Allen of Camden was surprised to see her middle school son unable to stop spending money on micropurchases as the COVID-19 pandemic hit. Playing Xbox games connected him to his friends during the lockdown, she knew.

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photo credit: Vlada Karpovich / PEXELS

Business

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MEDICAL MARIJUANA MEETING GETS TESTY OVER TESTING COSTS

BY SAM HAUT

A frustrated Delaware medical marijuana provider accused a testing company of charging “grossly higher” fees than those in other states. The exchange took place Thursday evening in the Medical Marijuana Stakeholder Group, after Daniel Woodall, president, and chemist at the High Tide Lab Co., talked about testing marijuana for medicinal companies in the state.

“I would like to make a comment,” said Michael Wiser, president of the Compassionate Care Research Institute.

Wiser told the group he is concerned about the increased cost of testing. Compassionate Care spends more than \$1 million a year on testing, Wiser said.

“To be perfectly frank with you, we’ve operated in five states, and the fees that you’re charging are grossly higher than any other state we’ve operated in,” he said. “Just want to register that we are complaining about it. We think that the amount that you’re charging is exorbitant.”

Woodall responded “That’s bullcrap. That is such garbage.” Woodall said he didn’t appreciate the insinuation that the testing fees are responsible for increases in prices.

“There’s no way that the testing fee is an excuse,” he said. “You guys have charged the same amount of money forever. It’s the same price; don’t blame that on the lab. I don’t set your prices.”

“That’s such garbage, I’m sorry, buddy, but that’s such garbage. Sir, I will consider your statements. But don’t say that high prices are because of the lab.”

Asked how much they made last year, Wiser said he didn’t know, but Woodall estimated that it was around \$20 million. Wiser said that number was inaccurate and the real number is much lower.

Efforts were unsuccessful Friday to reach Wiser for comment.

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BIOSCIENCE LEADERS PRIME LEGISLATORS ON GROWTH OF SECTOR

BY BETSY PRICE

The First State's growing biosciences industry has its roots in the 1992 creation of the Delaware Technology Park, state life sciences and technology advocates told a Senate committee Wednesday. Today, that sector of the economy is responsible for 11,000 jobs with \$2 billion in gross domestic product, said Mike Fleming, president of **DelawareBio**, which advocates for and offers support to life science companies.

The 30-year growth in biotech companies also has spurred a growth in investment resources and federal funding, Fleming said, as well as a 64% surge among those who earn degrees in fields related to bio businesses. A 2021 report from DelawareBio said that the state has seen a 65% growth of new startups in the biotech area.

"That has not historically been an area of strength for Delaware, small startup science and technology companies," he said. "We've been fortunate historically to be

home to big companies. I think what you're going to see increasingly is a transformation of our economy is moving to more shots on smaller companies, many of them led by folks who worked in the market or a company.

"That's the future of the state."

All of that means Delaware is well-positioned to see growth in advanced manufacturing of drugs and more related businesses, as well as additional startups, he told the Senate Banking, Business, Insurance and Technology committee.

BIOSCIENCES GROWTH

The **Delaware Technology Park**, a 501c3 nonprofit created by then-Gov. Mike Castle, was meant to promulgate the growth of technology businesses in the state in a partnership with the University of Delaware, the state and the private sector, said Mike Bowman, CEO of the technology park. It would go on to be one of

the strands in a web of university, government and business resources trying to turn bioscience ideas into marketable products and profits. The center first focused on advanced materials but then technology began moving toward life sciences, Bowman said.

The park once boasted one building; then five on the edge of UD's campus, and now it's moved into the Star Campus, Bowman said. During the time, he said, 150 companies have been started from scratch and four have gone public. About 16,000 jobs were created and about \$1 billion came through investment grants.

Along the way, the sector spawned DelawareBio and The National Institute for Innovation in Manufacturing Biopharmaceuticals at UD. Niimbl in 2021 received \$153 million federal funding to foster the manufacturing of drugs.

Delaware's growth in biosciences also involves UD's Office of Economic Innovation Partnership and the Small Business Development Center, Bowman said. The small business center helps start, scale and sustain small businesses, he said. The center alone has about 800 clients a year, 2,000 jobs and \$14 million capital, he said.

In recent years, talk about the industry has also lead to concerns about financial health and the SBDC has now partnered in the creation of a six-floor, 100,000-square-foot center of excellence at UD that will the College of Engineering, the College of Business, individual sciences such as cybersecurity, artificial intelligence and augmented reality.

It's allowed that group to help startups and it's allowed UD students to work in those business and come out of school with great resumes.

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photo credit: Pixabay / PEXELS



Food & Dining

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BY PAM GEORGE

Paul Cullen is on a mission to make risotto more approachable. Too often, home cooks avoid serving the northern Italian dish, said Cullen, who offers in-home parties featuring his Italian cuisine. They picture standing at the stove, tediously stirring broth into arborio rice until it reaches a creamy consistency. But that doesn't have to be the case.

“You don't have to stir it every waking moment,” said Cullen, who owns **Paul's Kitchen**, which sells proprietary products and Italian imports.

See for yourself on Friday, March 31, when Cullen is the featured chef during the **Food Bank of Delaware's** Cooking for a Cause.

COOKING FOR A CAUSE RETURNS TO BENEFIT FOOD BANK

FUNDRAISING AT HOME

Along with mushroom-and-sausage risotto, the virtual cooking class will feature Tuscan white bean dip and Italian wine from his label, **Paul Cullen Wines**.

Nearly everything you need will be packaged for pick-up on Thursday, March 30, at the Food Bank's locations in Newark (222 Lake Drive) or Milford (140 Mullet Run, Unit E). This year, Sussex County residents can pick up the ingredients at Paul's Kitchen in Lewes (32882 Cedar Grove Road, just west of Route 1).

The class goes live at 6 p.m. on March 31, so with a computer and a kitchen, you can sip Lambrusco and stir the rice in your yoga pants. Got plans that night? The broadcast will be available through Sunday, April 2.

THIRD TIME A CHARM

This is the third Cooking for a Cause, which was born during the pandemic when charities were canceling conventional fundraisers. However, the public embraced the homey approach.

“This year, I actually had friends and acquaintances ask me when the event would take place,” said Jeff Whitmarsh, the Food Bank board member who came up with the idea. “It was rewarding to realize that this event was something people looked forward to as an annual activity.”

The 2020 cooking class was live, but now it's taped in advance so viewers can stop, fast-forward or rewind the class. And while the team works on risotto, there's

plenty of time to talk and listen. Cullen, who fell in love with food and wine while on tour with Bad Company, will play guitar during the virtual event.

Kattie Fox will make raspberry-ricotta mousse for dessert, which you can make in advance.

“It's light, refreshing and super simple to make,” said Fox, an alumna of the Food Bank's cooking school. She now runs the Food Bank's café and helps oversee the catering program.

CAUSE FOR COOKING

Fox also teaches students to bake, and Whitmarsh and Cullen will discuss the culinary education and training program during the broadcast.

“Having the opportunity to showcase the different aspects of the Food Bank's culinary program makes it difficult to put a dollar value on” the fundraiser's impact, Whitmarsh said. “It tips the scale toward a virtual event.”

Not surprisingly, he noted that Cooking for a Cause is more cost-effective to organize than a labor-intensive in-person event. It's also a decent deal for the attendees; the cost is \$100 and the meal serves two people.

However, the Food Bank's cornhole tournament in spring and the Farm to Fork event in the fall are traditional fundraisers with in-person attendance.

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BY TERRY ROGERS

A new fondue restaurant in Milford will focus on simple menus with a variety of cheese and broths available by themselves or in a full dinner.

fondue., with a little F and its own period, is the newest venture of Zack and Marissa King, who also own **EasySpeak**, a popular distillery and brewpub in Milford.

“This is something completely new and different in Milford,” Marissa said. “The menu we have created is very simplistic with four courses typically. We are also offering a la carte.”

The restaurant’s offerings won’t be limited only to fondue. It will offer appetizers such as Pupu platters, Cajun seafood boil and a roasted garlic hummus plate, as well as a variety of salads. The cocktails will feature EasySpeak spirits, under the guidance of bar manager Taylor Davis.

“We are really excited about our cocktail menu as we have gotten incredibly artsy with them,” Marissa said.

DO YOU FONDUE? THERE'S A NEW MILFORD RESTAURANT FOR YOU

The vibe at fondue., located at 39 N. Walnut St., will be different from that of EasySpeak and more upscale, she said.

fondue. has three private soft openings scheduled before the restaurant opens to the public. Marissa said they hope to work out all the bugs before the grand opening.

“We are asking for patience as this is new to everyone,” Marissa said. “We are just really excited to bring this new concept to Milford.”

Once opened, fondue. won’t require reservations but will accept them for certain tables when reservations are made for the full four-course experience.

The restaurant revealed its menu on social media over the weekend. Cheese fondue, which serves up to two guests for \$21, will include Swiss; Wisconsin aged; south of the border; bacon, cheddar and ranch; and fontina, spinach and artichoke.

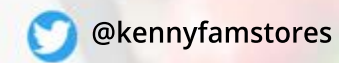
Dippers include broccoli florets, julienne carrots, red and green bell peppers, Granny Smith apple, French baguette, multigrain bread, pretzel and fingerling potatoes.



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Government

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RETIREE BENEFITS SUBCOMMITTEE DIGS INTO MEDICARE CONCERNS

BY SAM HAUT

The state has a variety of ways to lower what it's paying for retiree healthcare, a new benefits subcommittee was told Thursday. For current workers, they include:

- Cutting benefits for current employees by doing things like reducing benefits for spouses.
- Changing benefits given to people who worked for the state but didn't retire with the state.
- Establishing a minimum age to qualify for certain benefits.
- Changing the time it takes for employees to fully invest shares.

For retirees, those include:

- Moving to Medicare Advantage
- Using a Supplemental plan with different premiums
- Using a Health Reimbursement Arrangement
- Adjusting the cost share through the legislature.

Few details were given about those ideas as the State Employee Benefits Committee Retiree Healthcare Benefits Advisory Subcommittee met for the second time

Thursday to deal with Medicare benefits for retirees.

Bill Oberle, a member of the subcommittee, said that he doesn't have enough information at this time to make a decision regarding the Medicare Advantage plan. Denise Allen, another subcommittee member, said that there hasn't been enough analysis done on the Medicare Supplemental plan and that there's not enough information put out by the state on what the plans would entail.

The subcommittee was created earlier this year, spurred on by the outrage last year over a state plan to switch retirees from their current plan to a Medicare Advantage program. Retirees revolted, saying the move was made in secret, although it wasn't, and that it would cause a lot of problems for them. Those problems include making them switch doctors and require pre-authorizations for things they don't have to know.

Richard Geisenberger, secretary of the Delaware Department of Finance, repeated that one of the reasons for the move was to better control the costs of future

healthcare. If healthcare costs keep rising as they are now and the state keeps paying as it is now, Delaware's **unfunded liability** for healthcare plans is expected to grow to \$31 billion by 2050. Adopting the Medicare Advantage managed plan would have helped the state have only a \$3 billion deficit by 2050.

The lack of funding has already caught the attention of the nation's bond-rating companies, Geisinger said, and could mean Delaware's rating is dropped below AAA, causing the state to pay more for any money it borrows.

Delaware has been putting about \$45 million each year—1% of the state budget—into the Other Post Employment Benefits Fund to help cut into the deficit. Last year, it kicked over tens of millions from its budget surplus to help reduce the deficit more quickly and Gov. John Carney proposed doing that again with the 2024 budget, which starts July 1.

There's no silver bullet to cut costs, Geisenberger said. Even so, "this is very fixable problem," he said.

Some opponents to the changes have accused the state of trying to solve the problem by raising costs for current employees, he noted.

"That's never what was considered by the retiree benefits subcommittee," Geisenberger said.

Wayne Emsley, the New Castle County retiree on the subcommittee, made a presentation to the group showing that Delaware retirees make less on their pensions and Social Security than the average state employee salaries. However, he said, they pay for more monthly premiums than state employees, while Medicare retirees cost the state less per month.

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OFFICE OF NEW AMERICANS WOULD HELP DELAWARE IMMIGRANTS ADJUST

BY SAM HAUT

A bill that could create a state Office of New Americans to help immigrants better integrate into life in Delaware sailed through a General Assembly committee Wednesday. **Senate Bill 44**, sponsored by Darius Brown, D-Wilmington, cleared the Senate Elections & Government Affairs Committee on a vote of two yes and two on the merits. On the merits means the legislator thinks the matter deserves debate but doesn't want to go on the record supporting it.

Only four of the seven committee members attended the hearing: Brown, Rep. Stephanie Hansen, D-Middletown; Spiros Mantzavinos, D-Elsmere, and Rep. Eric Buckson, R-Dover. Senate committees don't take votes in public. When the tally appears on the General Assembly website, it appears as numbers with no names

attached. The bill now moves to the Senate Finance Committee because it will cost \$543,620 for the 2024 fiscal year, with costs increasing by 2% each year.

The bill would create an advisory committee to advise the new office and the governor in attracting, retaining and integrating immigrants into the state.

"I'm concerned when we do increase the size of the government whether it's small or large," Buckson said. "How does it bid? How does it work?"

Buckson asked Brown whether the government already provides the services listed in the bill. Brown replied that it does, but that the process would be more streamlined with the new office.

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TENANT RIGHT TO LAWYERS BILL HELD FOR CHANGES BY COMMITTEE

BY SAM HAUT

The Senate Housing & Land Use Committee on Wednesday heard from dozens of people supporting a bill to provide tenants who lose their leases the right to a lawyer to help.

Senate Bill 1, sponsored by Senate Majority Leader Bryan Townsend, D-Newark, would set up a system for tenants below 200% of the federal poverty line a right to an attorney when dealing with eviction proceedings. The bill has 28 additional sponsors and cosponsors, all Democrats. Among the 30 people speaking in favor of the bill was Javier Horstmann, chief policy advisor for the Delaware State Housing Authority.

“DSHA strongly supports this legislative effort as we have shown through our work to facilitate legal representation through our participation in the eviction defense program,” Horstmann said.

“This program...has demonstrated that access to representation can help prevent evictions and save limited resources to address homelessness.”

Debra Burgos, vice president of property management at the Delaware Apartment Association, said legislators have worked with them to make the bill more palatable than they found previous versions.

“We are very appreciative of the sponsor of this bill for working with our organization to try to find a compromise that will allow this bill to move forward,” Burgos said. “We’re committed to continuing to work with you on those amendments so that we can hopefully all be on the same page.”

Branden Fletcher, a housing organizer with the HOMES Campaign, said he’s seen the impact evictions have on members of the community.

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BILL WOULD SET UP REVIEW OF NONPROFIT GRANT REQUESTS

BY SAM HAUT

A bill that would create a new committee to oversee nonprofit grant requests for state appropriations was unanimously voted out of the House Administration Committee Wednesday.

The state spends a substantial amount of money on aiding nonprofits with projects and programs. Last year's \$69.4 million grant-in-aid package included more than \$14 million to paramedic program operations, \$6.3 million for neighborhood and community services, \$3.4 million for insurance rebate equalization, \$8.1 million to fire companies and almost \$500,000 to veteran organizations. Nonprofits also can apply for funding for construction projects under the state's Bond Bill.

The committee that would be set up by [House Bill 40](#), sponsored by Rep. Ruth Briggs King, R-Georgetown, would not have the power to make policy. It would review requests for grants-in-aid, including having authority to probe financial information about projects, and then pass the requests to the Joint Finance Committee. If passed, HB 401 would take effect Aug. 1, 2023.

The new committee would be composed of three members from the House and three members of the Senate, with at least one member from each chamber required to be a Republican. According to the fiscal note for the bill, the committee would cost \$33,057 in the 2024 fiscal year and increase by about 2% each year.

The bill had 10 other sponsors, including eight Republicans and two Democrats.

GRANT REVIEW NEEDED?

House Minority Leader Mike Ramone, R-Pike Creek, said during the meeting that he wished there was more oversight.

"I love this bill. I think we need to do it. I think we need to have better oversight and more discerning input from a group that would be able to value just how much value the state's getting from some of these nonprofits," Ramone said.

Melissa Hopkins, the executive vice president of sector advancement at the Delaware Alliance for Nonprofits, said they aren't sure the committee is necessary or how it improves the current system.

"DANA is taking a neutral approach to this bill," she said. "Whether or not we create another committee to do this work, I think where this is lacking is that we're not really understanding how the process improves by adding more people."

Rep. Valerie Longhurst, D-Bear, the chair of the committee, suggested an amendment to the bill that the controller general's office could help the grant-in-aid committee with some guidelines, and other members of the Administration Committee. Briggs King agreed with the suggestion. The bill will now move to the House floor ready list.



RESOLUTION DECLARES GUN VIOLENCE A PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY

BY SAM HAUT

A joint resolution to declare gun violence a public health emergency passed along party lines in the Delaware House and Senate Tuesday. In a House voice vote for [Senate Concurrent Resolution 12](#), there was an audible opposition from the Republican side of the aisle. In the Senate it passed 14 to six.

Introduced by Sen. Marie Pinkney, D-Bear, on March 14, the resolution included 16 additional sponsors and cosponsors, all Democrats.

“We have a responsibility to protect the people who elect us, trust us and believe in us,” Pinkney said.

The resolution acknowledges 36 people in Delaware have been shot this year so far and 226 last year.

“I’m asking for us to pull resources forward to save hundreds of lives and years to come,” she said.

She introduced a similar resolution in 2021, [Senate Concurrent Resolution 8](#), which passed the Senate 13 to eight, but was not voted on in the House. Democrats hold large majorities in both chambers.

The resolution states that the legislature will support policies to “make schools safe, confront armed hate and extremism, prevent suicide, and center and support survivors of gun violence.” It does not name any specific program or act. There was no discussion of the resolution in the House.

However, several Republican senators argued lives are also saved by guns, that guns are among many things that imperil the lives of Delawareans, that the opioid crisis is worse than the gun crisis and that violence cannot be contained.

Senate Minority Whip Brian Pettyjohn, R-Georgetown, said that he took issue with several of the whereas clauses in the resolution.

“I think we can all agree that violence and loss of life is something that we should do everything we can to avoid it,” Pettyjohn said. “And whether it’s by gun, whether it’s by knife, whether it’s by a drunk driver on our road, we need to look for facts. We need to look for

proven ways to diminish the number of Delawareans who are dying before their time.”

Pettyjohn said that the fourth clause, which states that gun violence costs about \$557.2 billion annually, is incomplete because many lives are also saved due to gun violence.

He also cited the fifth clause, which states that more guns have been sold during the COVID-19 pandemic. Pettyjohn said he doesn’t think there’s a correlation between an increase in guns sold and gun violence.

Pinkney said that addressing gun violence doesn’t mean they don’t care about other causes of death.

“Today, I’m talking about a public health approach to the violence that results from gun ownership and from gun use,” Pinkney said. “I’m asking for us to put resources behind data gathering. I’m asking for us to put additional resources to the proven violence reduction programs that we already have across this state...I am simply asking that we put money and resources behind stopping people from dying.”

Sen. Dave Lawson, R-Marydel, argued that it’s impossible to stop violence.

“I certainly agree with you,” he said. “We’ve got to stop the unnecessary killings, dying from drugs or what have you in the state of Delaware.

“Can we stop it? No, we can’t. Violence has always been...We’ve always had the violence and more people are killed...from knives and fists than firearms.”

Sens. Kyle Evans Gay, D-Brandywine Hundred/Arden, and Stephanie Hansen, D-Middletown/Newark, asked to be added to the list of co-sponsors.

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SENATE VOTES TO EASE WORKLOAD OF FAMILY SERVICE WORKERS

BY JAREK RUTZ

Case workers for the Division of Family Services could soon be getting a reduced workload. The Delaware Senate voted Tuesday to approve a recommendation made by the Child Protection Accountability Commission to drop the number of families that case workers follow from 18 to 12. [Senate Bill 33](#), sponsored by Sen. Kyle Evans Gay, D-Arden, would act on the commission's final report of Nov. 20, 2019.

"It doesn't take a large stretch of the imagination to understand that these workers are under stress and that they are trying to do their best for families," Gay said. "Moving them towards a more standardized and target caseload of 12 cases is going to both help with retention as well outcomes for families who are going through the system."

The bill passed unanimously with no discussion. It will now head to the House floor. There is no fiscal note attached to the bill.

"As someone who volunteers my legal time pro bono working with foster children, I could not do my work for these kids without the tremendous work that the caseworkers are doing for children and families," Gay said.

If caseloads exceed 12 during any fiscal year for a single worker, the [Office of Management and Budget](#) must authorize the use of casual seasonal positions as a temporary way to ensure that caseloads remain within the confines of the law, according to the bill. It now heads to the House.

Also in the Senate Tuesday:

- [Senate Bill 32](#), sponsored by Nicole Poore, D-Delaware City, adds blindness/visual impairment to the list of programs funded to run year-round. Now, the only children who qualify for the programs are those diagnosed with severe mental disability, trainable mental disability, autism, traumatic brain injury, deaf-blindness or orthopedic disability, limited to cerebral palsy, muscular dystrophy, spina bifida, juvenile rheumatoid arthritis, amputation, arthrogyrosis or contractures caused by fractures or burns. The bill now heads to the House.
- [Senate Concurrent Resolution 14](#), sponsored by Sen. Marie Pinkney, D-Bear, recognized March 14 as "Pi Day" in Delaware. Pinkney said it will bring more attention to the important subject of math. The resolution also passed the House Tuesday.
- [Senate Concurrent Resolution 11](#), sponsored by Senate Majority Leader Bryan Townsend, D-Newark, would recognize today (March 18) as National Public Defense Day. It also was passed by Senate and heads to Gov. John Carney for his signature.
- [House Concurrent Resolution 15](#), sponsored by Rep. Stephanie Bolden, D-Wilmington, designated March 14, as "Equal Pay Day" in Delaware. Senate Majority Whip Elizabeth "Tizzy" Lockman, D-Wilmington, said women are disproportionately paid and driven out of the workforce more than their male counterparts. The resolution now heads to the governor.

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Education

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TWO DEL. STUDENTS HEAD TO NATIONAL SCIENCE CAMP, STEM CAREERS

BY JAREK RUTZ

Newark Charter High School junior Runyl Liu said her passion for science comes from a middle school jingle she heard.

“We heard this one song about the periodic table and I just really liked the song,” Liu said. “I sort of fell in love with the periodic table and all how chemistry works. It was a very, very odd journey, but what I know is that I am definitely a STEM girl.”

Liu will join MOT Charter School senior Maanvi Sarwadi as the two Delaware delegates selected to attend the all-expenses-paid 2023 National Youth Science Camp. Both hope the experience will help boost their planned STEM careers.

From June 19 to July 12, the two will head south to Monongahela National Forest in West Virginia, where the camp has been held since its founding in 1963.

“I’m really looking forward to the outdoor adventures where we’ll combine nature with science,” Liu said. “I’ve always found that interesting.”

Each state sends two representatives to the camp, as does Washington, DC; Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Mexico, and Trinidad and Tobago.

Celebrating its 60th year, the camp is designed to honor and challenge rising leaders and provide them with opportunities to engage with STEM professionals and participate in outdoor activities.

“They get to go kayaking and rock-climbing, do yoga, practice different languages, listen to keynote lectures during the day with prominent scientists and engineers, and really get to have a wide array of experiences,” said Tonyea Mead, Delaware’s coordinator for the camp.

The speakers for this year have yet to be announced,



but previous years included astrophysicist **Neil de-Grasse Tyson**, astronaut **Neil Armstrong**, mathematician **John Nash**, fighter pilot Gen. **Chuck Yeager**, physician-geneticist **Francis Collins**, NASA scientist **Julie Robinson**, former Yahoo! President **Marissa Mayer** and inventor David Hackleman.

Liu said meeting professionals in the fields she’s interested in will help grow her network before even entering college.

“The camp will help me make connections, get to meet really like-minded people that are interested in science, and get to meet very well-acclaimed experts in the fields is an awesome opportunity,” she said.

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APPO TO LEASE WEAPON DETECTORS AMID SCHOOLS' FOCUS ON SAFETY

BY JAREK RUTZ

Appoquinimink School District's vote this week to install weapon detectors is the latest move by Delaware schools to combat violence and the presence of guns. It's an issue that's plagued schools since fall, with the latest incident occurring Wednesday when a Sussex Central High School student was found with a firearm on school property. The student was taken into custody and the firearm was also confiscated.

Districts have approached the problems in different ways—through hiring constables, increasing event security and more—often citing the Uvalde, Texas, school shooting on May 24, 2022, as spurring concern. Trouble at fall football games and the discovery of guns in schools has ratcheted up fears.

REASON FOR DETECTORS

In September 2022, Appoquinimink School District and New Castle County Vo-Tech's Howard High School changed their **football admissions policies** in response to a shooting that took place off of Appoquinimink High's campus during a game, and another incident where crowds stormed the exits and hopped fences at a Howard game.

In February, a 16-year old male was charged in connection to a **fired gun** in Colonial School District's William Penn High School. On the same day as Colonial's incident, unloaded guns were discovered in the backpacks of an 8-year-old and a 14-year-old at Shortlidge Elementary School and A.I. du Pont Middle School, respectively.

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EDUCATION LEADERS FIGHT BILLS ADDING DAYS OFF FOR TEACHERS

BY JAREK RUTZ

Bills that would expand the reasons and days for teachers to take days off from work divided legislators and public commenters in the Senate Education Committee Wednesday.

Senate Bill 60, sponsored by Sen. Laura Sturgeon, D-Hockessin, who is chair of the committee, would give teachers and other school employees the same protection to be absent without a loss of pay as other state employees to:

- Appear under subpoena to testify in a matter, unless they are one of the parties in the case or if the trial is directly related to that employee’s work.
- Report to serve on a jury.

The backlash came from heads of educational organizations.

“I’ve been on many juries and many jury duty assignments, and it’s usually a two-week assignment,” said John

Marinucci, executive director of the **Delaware School Board Association**. “Two weeks out of the classroom is a long time, especially now, when we have so many needs in the classroom. Now is not the time to identify ways to help teachers not to be in a classroom.”

Tammy Croce, executive director of the **Delaware Association of School Administrators**, said it was unlawful for the General Assembly to rule on this subject. “Those rules should and currently do fall under the purview of the local boards of education,” she said.

Woodbridge School District Superintendent Heath Chasanov, speaking on behalf of the 19 district superintendents, said he was against the bill for the same reason.

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Health

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BY SAM HAUT

The Delaware House unanimously passed a bill on Tuesday that would require Delaware insurance plans to cover epinephrine auto-injectors for everyone. Today in Delaware, epinephrine is only guaranteed to people 18 years or younger. If **House Bill 54** passes the Senate, all Delawareans would be guaranteed at least one injector in the lowest tier of their insurance. The bill would not take effect until 2024. There is no fiscal note attached to the bill.

HB 24 is sponsored by Kimberly Williams, D-Stanton, along with 19 other sponsors, 18 Democrats and one Republican, Rep. Ruth Briggs King, R-Georgetown. The bill follows 2021's **House Bill 95**, also sponsored by Williams, which established epinephrine coverage for those 18 years and younger.

Following passage of HB 54, Williams said in a press release that epinephrine shouldn't cost as much as it does. The drug is used to counteract allergic reactions, which kill people by closing airways and making their tongues swell, among other symptoms.

DELAWARE HOUSE PASSES BILL TO MAKE EPIPENS MORE AFFORDABLE

EPIPENS BECAME EXPENSIVE

"We have seen how much drug prices have gone up in recent years, forcing many of our constituents to make unthinkable decisions about whether they can afford this life-saving drug," Williams said. "It costs less than a Capriotti's bobbie to manufacture an EpiPen, but a two-pack of EpiPens can cost more than a car payment."

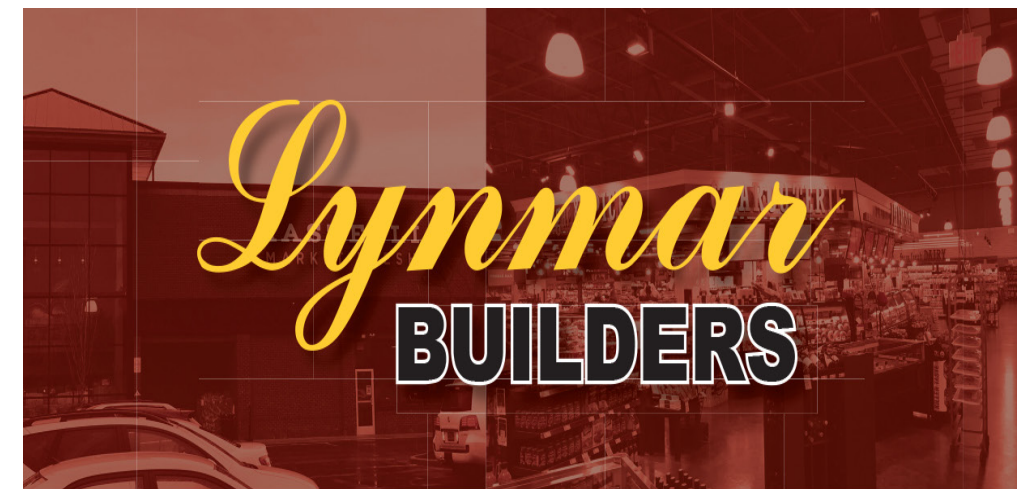
Sen. Sarah McBride, D-Wilmington, said in the release that EpiPens are the only medication that will save the life of a person suffering from anaphylaxis, but they are among the most expensive medications on the market.

"No one who is at risk of a severe allergic reaction should forgo carrying an EpiPen simply because they are too expensive," she said.

The cost of epinephrine has increased dramatically in the last decade, from \$106 in November 2004 to \$608 in May 2016. After the rights to EpiPen's were purchased by Mylan in 2007, that company dramatically raised prices, even though the core cost of the pen's **components** are about \$34.

Delaware isn't the only place to try to make medication more affordable. As part of the federal **Inflation Reduction Act**, Medicare will put a \$35 cap on the price of insulin.

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MYERS SETS TWO RECORDS FOR DELAWARE TECH SOFTBALL

BY NICK HALLIDAY

Macey Myers became the first player in Delaware Technical Community College softball to eclipse both 100 hits and 100 RBI. Macey went 4-for-6 and knocked in six RBI in a doubleheader against Anne Arundel Community College to open the season, which put her over the 100 mark in both categories, supplanting her in the history books forever. Myers was named Eastern Pennsylvania Athletic Conference Player of the Week for softball due to her outstanding stats during the teams first four games of the 2023 season. She batted 9-for-11 with six doubles, one home run, and nine RBI.

Myers didn't know she had set the records till "one day at practice" and she said "I never thought about it or never crossed my mind, like it was a complete surprise. They announced it at practice one day and I had no idea they had anything planned. I had no idea how many hits or how close I was. It was a complete surprise."

In a press release from Del Tech, as of March 15, Myers has 110 career hits and 115 career RBI and the team has 33 games remaining in the regular season. As a freshman, she recorded 39 hits, 44 RBI and had a batting average of .494. The next season, she blew those

numbers out of the water with 58 hits, 59 RBI and a .460 batting average. Myers said "I have an approach where all I try to do is hit the ball hard and like that has always been my approach since I was 12 years old."

While Myers technically accomplished both over parts of three seasons, she ultimately did it in just 64 games. We spoke to Jason Burlew, the public relations manager at the school, and he emphasized she accomplished in a set of games that would be a normal career for any other player. Her freshman season was shortened by at least five games due to other schools not competing during the COVID-19 pandemic. Since she only needed two games in her third season to break 100 hits, she likely would've done it sooner if she had played the regular amount of games during her first season.

For more information on Delaware Tech Athletics, visit www.dtcc.edu/athletics or follow dtccathletics on Instagram.





SALESIANUM WINS 2023 BOYS' BASKETBALL STATE TITLE

added five, and Ethan Hinds with three, as each player connected on three-pointers. The Colonials went 1-11 from the field in the quarter.

In the third quarter, Salesianum took its largest lead of the game of 11 points when they went up 31-20 with a little more than five minutes on the clock. That lead still did not discourage the battle tested Colonials. They went on a 7-0 run to bring the game back within four points of the Sals and even had the game down to two points a few minutes later. However, the Sals were able to hold off the Colonials taking a 39-32 lead into the fourth quarter.

In the fourth quarter, the Sals again would have to fend off the Colonials. Sallies scored the first two points of the quarter, but after that they were outscored 10-4 by William Penn for the next few minutes. Penn was able to bring the score to within one point, 43-42 with 1:32 left. Jaiden Guy was the catalyst in that run, scoring six points in the quarter.

Salesianum's defense stepped up after the William Penn run. They only gave up two points to the Colonials in the last minute of the game. Penn still had a chance to at least tie the game to force overtime, but the defense stepped up again. Down 47-44 with 15 seconds left Penn had possession right at half court. The inbounds went to Guy, but they immediately started screening for Jalen Sample who had already hit three three-pointers in the game, but Sallies did a great job of switching, which forced Sample to retreat backwards. As time ran out, Sample had to put up a shot from around the center quarter logo that missed everything.

Salesianum was able to come away with its first state title in basketball since 2015 with a 48-44 victory. Hynson led the Sals with a game-high 20 points. Thomas was the other Sallies player in double figures, with 14 points hitting 3-4 shots from behind the arc.

For the Colonials, Sample led the way with 13 points with Guy adding 12 and Emmanuel Vonhm had 10.

BY NICK HALLIDAY

Salesianum and William Penn both had tough roads getting through the bracket since neither team was a top seed. Salesianum came in as the No. 5 seed, while William Penn came in as the No.7 seed. Both teams came into this game battle tested and ready, having had to knock off all the higher seeds to get there.

The game was just what you would have expected with two teams who have played some of the toughest schedules throughout the state. Neither team was going to back down or be intimidated by the other. Penn was able to defeat Sallies earlier in the season at home by a score of 75-63. Sallies would avenge that loss in the biggest game of the season.

The game was tied after one quarter at 10-10, but the Sals were able to separate with a big second quarter. Sallies doubled the outcome of the Colonials outscoring them 16-8 in the quarter. Isaiah Hynson led the way with six points while Kareem Thomas



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