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April 9, 2023

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Saint Mark's Edges Appo

photo link: Visit Delaware

Headlines



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SHE WANTED TO HELP. NOW WINGMOM SERVES 5,000 CLIENTS

BY BETSY PRICE

After Kate Maxwell's firefighter fiancé died in the 2016 Canby Park fire, she crawled into a tunnel of grief and substance abuse. Nine months later, when she got sober with the help of her parents, she was overwhelmed with the amount of love and support she had been shown during that time.

Her best friend, Meg Hurst, and others came to check on her, cooked for her and her kids, cleaned the house and did a number of chores and errands on her behalf while Maxwell sat on the sofa "comatose with grief" after the death of Capt. Chris Leach.

"The community totally surrounded me and showed me so much love and support," Maxwell said. "When I kind of got back on my feet my thought process was 'I've got to find a way to give back.'"

The result was Wingmom, a company that offers all kinds of services including giving kids rides, doing laundry, cleaning, organizing, senior care and even cooking a dish for an overwhelmed mom to take to a party.

The six-year-old company had total sales of \$1.1 million in 2022, all while employing an army of moms who are able to work as much or as little as they want for wages that start at \$19 an hour.

"We have this amazing byproduct that I never thought about in that we're taking women that wouldn't traditionally be employable because they are stay at home

moms or they are trying to support their family through a second job and we are giving them jobs because of our flexibility," Maxwell said.

Wingmom has franchises in Middletown, serving all the way to Dover; southern Pennsylvania; Bucks County, PA; Catskills, NY; and, soon, Washington Township, NJ.

In total, the franchises serve more than 5,000 customers with 250 Wingmoms—and as of 2020 some Wingdads. The original north Delaware franchise alone has 125 Wingmoms and Wingdads on their payrolls.

Maxwell said she never expected the growth that the company has seen.

"I thought that Wingmom was just going to be a way to make some extra cash while helping moms with their day-to-day while I figured out my next move," Maxwell said. "And it ended up becoming this large company."

The company has a lot of vocal fans praising it on social media. Sarah Goldfarb Weeden hires Wingmom to clean her house and has found Vickey Smith, who runs Wingmom's home management department, to be remarkably more reliable than other cleaning companies.

But Goldfarb Weeden's favorite Wingmom story took place on her first day back at work after taking leave when her youngest daughter needed major surgery at CHOP in Philly.

[READ MORE HERE](#)



MINISTRY OF CARING TO CUT THREE WILMINGTON HOUSING PROGRAMS

BY JAREK RUTZ

Wilmington's **Ministry of Caring** is cutting three programs that provide housing to homeless people and AIDS patients because of federal funding cuts. The cuts are a result of the **U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development** slashing \$685,991 from the ministry's \$10 million budget.

"Without our services, these people are going to end up back on the streets and perhaps dead," said Priscilla Rakestraw, deputy director of development at the ministry, on Tuesday.

One woman, she said, has been living at one of the ministry's facilities for almost a decade. She's on dialysis and will not be able to get those medical services later this year when her bed is removed due to the funding cuts.

It's the second year in the row that the Wilmington charity has had its allocation cut. Last year, its funding was cut by \$185,000. The ministry had \$11.1 million in revenue in 2020, the agency's 2020 annual report said.

Brother Ronald Giannone, the executive director of the ministry, said in an email to supporters that eight beds at the House of Joseph II, which houses people living with HIV/AIDS, will be removed June 30. That's half of the building's beds. The other eight beds are funded through a different federal grant. Breaking the news to the eight residents who would be leaving was extremely difficult, and a couple had serious mental breakdowns, said Ashley Edwards, a nurse at the House of Joseph II.

"We have no choice except to notify our residents that

we will cease to provide them housing," Giannone said in the email. "This is a tragic and sad moment for the Ministry of Caring and the people we serve."

All 24 beds that the ministry has at St. Francis Transitional Housing for women, children and infants, will also be discontinued June 30.

Mary Mother of Hope House Permanent Housing program, which houses nine single women, will end Nov. 30, the note said.

"It's disgraceful to cut a program that helps people in so many ways," said John Bates, deputy director of programs at the ministry.

He said Delaware's Continuum of Care, which oversees the allocations from the federal government and uses a rubric to grade programs, indicated that the cuts were partly a result of a low score for supportive services.

Bates also said at the federal level, there's been a push for rapid rehousing, which would essentially pay for a three-month, six-month or nine-month residency period for an individual the ministry is helping. But rapid rehousing definitely does not work for everyone, he said. If someone is homeless for years, gets a six-month residency, and then is booted out of the facility, that person is going to end up in the same place they started: homeless.

Gianonne said in his email that there's no chance of reversing the department's decision.

"It would be unwise for us to believe that we could carry these programs while losing HUD funds of \$685,991," he said. "This is a continuing annual loss and therefore for us to use other sources it would put a burden on our finances."

[READ MORE HERE](#)

CARNEY TO END PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY ORDER IN MAY

BY BETSY PRICE

Playing follow the leader, Gov. John Carney announced March 28 he will end the State of Delaware's COVID-19 Public Health Emergency Order on May 11. That will coincide with the plans of President Joe Biden, who announced months ago that he would end the national public health emergency May 11.

"Consistent with the ending of the federal public health emergency, and with Delaware's continued progress in moving beyond COVID-19, we'll plan to end our public health order this May," Carney said in a press release. "We will keep working with businesses and the health care industry as we finalize this transition. Thank you to each and every Delawarean who helped us get to where we are today."

Under Delaware law, **Public Health Emergency** orders must be renewed every 30 days.

Carney extended his public health emergency order on March 31 and will plan to formally extend the state's order once more in April.

EMERGENCY ORDER PROTESTS

The order enraged many who were opposed to some of the things imposed under it: business shutdowns; virtual classes; mask mandates for business and schools; and mandatory COVID-19 vaccinations for some jobs.

"It's about time," said Senate Minority Whip Brian Pettyjohn, R-Georgetown.

House Minority Leader Mike Ramone, D-Pike Creek, said many people wanted the state of emergency lifted months ago. But if Carney had lifted it early, many Delawareans who receive Medicaid would not have been eligible for the extended Medicaid benefits.

"Because of that particular issue, the Public Health State of Emergency was extended to May to give those whom now will be removed from the eligibility roles time to make adjustments in their lives to prepare for the modifications," he said.

"It's time to move past this extended initiative," he said. One reason that Carney kept the order, he and others

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have said, is because it needed to be in place in order for the state and state programs to get federal money.

As the federal government is stepping back, it also means that **emergency food stamps** were stopped in March and that Delaware will begin looking at those enrolled in the Medicaid program in a process they describe as "unwinding."

When the COVID-19 pandemic began, people were allowed to join Medicaid without having to jump through hoops like having their **income verified**. Now they will have to. But there's a catch for the state: Federal money will dry up faster than federal rules will allow the state to remove people from Medicaid rolls. In the meantime, the state will have to foot some of the costs that had been paid by Medicaid.



LOW ENROLLMENT FORCES NEW SUSSEX CHARTER TO DELAY OPENING

BY JAREK RUTZ

A Sussex County charter school that was supposed to open its doors this fall will wait another year to open.

The **Bryan Allen Stevenson School of Excellence**, first proposed in 2017, received state approval on May 5 to open in Georgetown for the 2023-2024 school year. However, the school's enrollment numbers did not meet the state's requirements. All charter schools must have 80 percent of their enrollment by April 1 to operate the following academic year.

BASSE, as organizers call the school, has 124 students enrolled for its inaugural year. That is 76 students short of 200 students, the number authorized by the state for the school to operate. School officials said in a statement that the opening will be delayed and the building would open for the 2024-2025 academic year.

Secretary of Education Mark Holodick approved the school's request to open a year later.

"Over 120 families want their children to become BASSE students this fall," said Chantalle Ashford,

BASSE's founding school leader, in the statement. "Though we hate to defer our dream of providing a new school option to the students in Sussex County, we are looking forward to opening in fall 2024."

GEORGETOWN'S NEW CHARTER

The school's budget can be found [HERE](#). It'll receive \$1,896,707 from the state in its first year of operation, \$2,578,165 in its second, \$3,267,320 in its third and \$4,059,532 in its fourth.

"We're rolling right along and getting the word out. People were incredibly supportive and enthusiastic. But it takes time, and we just ran out of it," said Betsy Renzo, vice board chair of the school, in the statement.

More than \$1 million in grants and individual donations has helped start the school, with most of that coming from the **Longwood Foundation** and **Welfare Foundation**.

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SHOULD 16-YEAR-OLDS BE ABLE TO VOTE IN SCHOOL BOARD RACES?

BY JAREK RUTZ

A bill that would drop the age to vote in school board elections to 16 is drawing strong opposition from one education group. The voting age now is 18.

House Bill 96, sponsored by Rep. Eric Morrison, D-Glasgow, which would lower that voting age for school board races, is set to be heard Wednesday at the 3 p.m. House Education Committee.

Efforts were unsuccessful to reach Morrison for comment. He is said to favor the move as a way to get more students involved in civic life.

The **Department of Education** does not have a position on the bill, according to Alison May, the department's public information officer.

The **Delaware School Boards Association** not only opposes the bill, but says it is unconstitutional.

The 77-year-old association is made up of school boards with the goal of helping improve public educa-

tion and assisting board members in carrying out their responsibilities.

John Marinucci, the group's executive director, pointed to Article V, Section 2 of the Delaware Constitution, which establishes that the state's legal voting age is 21.

"Of course, the 26th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution superseded the Delaware Constitution and lowered the voting age to 18 nation-wide," he said. "Neither the Delaware Constitution, nor the U.S. Constitution as amended by Amendment 26, indicates a distinction between school board elections and/or state and national elections."

Because of that, Marinucci said, the association can't support a bill that violates the state constitution.

Rep. Charles Postles, R-Milford, who is on the House Education Committee, will oppose the bill. "I believe it is unconstitutional," he said. "I see nothing that differ-

entiates school board elections and any other state or national election."

Naveed Baqir, a board member of Christina School District, said the legislation is an awesome idea.

"Reducing the voting age from 18 to 16 would give young people a greater say in the decisions that affect their lives, which would help to ensure that their voices are heard and their interests are represented in the political process," he said.

Changing the age would encourage Delaware's youth to become more engaged in politics and to take an active role in shaping their future, he said.

"It also would help to create a more diverse and representative electorate, as younger people tend to have different perspectives and priorities than older generations," Baqir said.

Jose Matthews, a Red Clay Consolidated School District board member agreed with Baqir, saying that the legislation speaks to the continued push to include student voice in district decisions.

"Red Clay has a student representative seat at all of our board meetings, which was originally met with fear and hostility, but is now one of the most revered highlights of our board," he said. "School board elections are already one of the least notable and participated public elections in our state, with the strong majority of adults 18+ staying home at the polls, so perhaps this will get folks paying attention."

Under HB 96, the minimum voting age would remain 18 in all other public school elections, including referendums.

[READ MORE HERE](#)



Culture

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photo link: Clear Space Theatre Company





DTC NEW SEASON: SOMETHING OLD, SOMETHING NEW, LOTS IN BETWEEN

BY BETSY PRICE

A classic farce, a look at the first Black-owned pro basketball team, a prequel to “Peter Pan,” a celebration of a country music queen and a world premiere by a favorite Philly playwright will make up the Delaware Theater Co.’s 2023-24 season.

The plays include:

- “Noises Off!” by Michael Frayn, Sept. 20-Oct. 8. The Tony Award-winning play is a backstage farce that’s full of slamming doors, surprises and laughs.
- “Kings of Harlem” by Layon Gray. Oct. 25-Nov. 12. It’s the 100th anniversary of the team, which won more than 2,000 games, from the writer/director of last year’s “Black Angels Over Tuskegee.”
- “Peter and the Starcatcher,” a show that DTC has wanted to stage for a long time, Dec. 6-24. By Dave Barry and Ridley Pearson, it covers the years in

which Peter Pan became Peter Pan, with a dozen actors playing more than 100 characters.

- “Always...Patsy Cline” created by Ted Swindley, Feb. 21-March 10. The show includes 30 hits from the star whose life was cut short.
- “The Flatlanders” by Bruce Graham, April. 17-May 5. A Poconos blizzard causes trouble for a couple stuck in a cabin that belongs to total strangers.

Several of the choices are designed to appeal to a non-traditional classic theater audience. Many people would prefer something that relates directly to their lives in some way, said Matt Silva, executive director. He uses music as one way to appeal to some of them.

This year, it’s “Always ... Patsy Cline,” a jukebox show that uses 30 of the country music star’s hits.

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ALT

BY KEN MAMMARELLA

Delaware is planning a 100-foot statue of April Ludgate, the “Parks and Rec” character created by famous Delawarean Aubrey Plaza, the official Twitter feed of Delaware’s government announced on April 1.

An artist’s rendering of the statue shows it next to the lighthouse in Cape Henlopen State Park, just smaller than the lighthouse but towering over a drawing of Li’l Sebastian, a miniature horse that appeared on the NBC sitcom.

“The air is too fresh,” the posting quotes Ludgate. “It’s disgusting.”

DEL. PLANS STATUE OF AUBREY PLAZA'S APRIL LUDGATE

“Delaware is excited to announce a new artistic installation featuring a 100-ft tall statue of April Ludgate, the Parks and Rec character played by Aubrey Plaza (voted most famous Delawarean in the News Journal),” the Twitter post says, mistaking a large sculpture for a bit of law. By dusk on Saturday, the post earned almost 1 million views and more than 350 retweets, 80 quotes, 2,800 likes and 20 bookmarks.

One was from Plaza: “Dreams DO come true. Thank you,” she wrote, followed by a heart.

Other responses:

“Now when you guys going to update the aubrey plaza plaza ...”

“I live in DE and have no clue who this is!!”

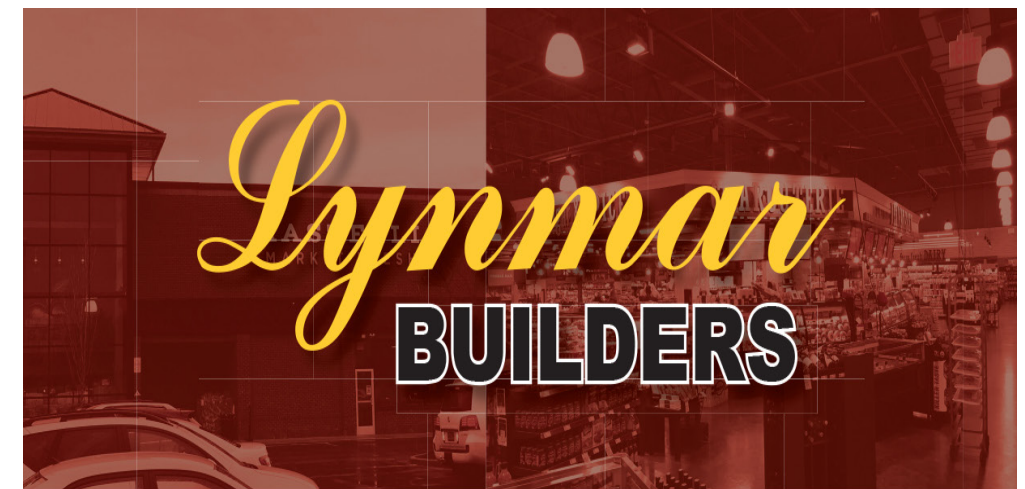
“i’m from australia and would fly over to visit this historical masterpiece”

“Ok now actually build it you cowards, give the people what they want”

“Ugly...awful”

And “Is this an April fools joke?”

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Business

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LEGISLATIVE SMALL BUSINESS CAUCUS GRILLS GARVIN ON EV RULES

BY SAM HAUT

Delaware will adjust its proposed electric vehicle regulations if sales are less than expected, costs of repairing EVs are comparable to gas vehicles and the state is considering a hybrid public comment meeting.

So said Shawn Garvin, secretary of the Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control, during a meeting Thursday with the House Small Business Caucus. Garvin fielded questions from both business owners and legislators in a meeting that House Minority Leader Mike Ramone, R-Pike Creek, said was the most candid he had seen Garvin.

“I’m gonna be honest—he did the best presentation he has done anywhere to date,” Ramone said. “You heard him at his best.”

Ramone said he wished Garvin would hold more meetings across the state to get a better idea of the public’s thoughts on the [regulations](#), especially if Garvin

will be the one making the final decision. The proposed regulations published Saturday follow an executive order from Gov. John Carney that allows DNREC to make rules and enforce rules designed to increase the number of electric vehicles on the road, without going through the General Assembly.

The proposal is facing opposition from Republicans. Ramone and Senate Minority Whip Brian Pettyjohn, R-Georgetown, plan to introduce bills to curb DNREC’s ability to regulate vehicles and that require the legislature to vote on any new regulations. Ramone says he’s spoken to several Democrats about the bills, which he sees as bipartisan, and meant to give the legislature a say in something that will impact so many.

The new regulations require dealerships to increase the number of electric vehicles—which the regs call “zero emission” from 35% in 2026 to 100% by 2035. It

does that by forcing manufacturers to deliver that many to the dealers with whom they have contracts.

Public comment on the proposed regulations isn’t until April 26.

At Thursday’s meeting, Chip Sheridan, president of the Delaware Car Dealers Association, asked Garvin what they should do if electric vehicles are not selling as well as they hope.

“My concern is what happens if demand is not going to pick up in the way that this anticipates,” Sheridan said. “Now the dealers are essentially holding the inventory for a product that might not be progressing the way we had hoped.”

Garvin said the state can adjust the regulation if needed. “This wouldn’t kick in until model year 2027,” Garvin said. “It will ramp up over the course of time. We will continue to monitor it, and if the demand in the market isn’t there, then we’re gonna have to take a look at that and the infrastructure as well. But everything is geared towards not only, as we’re looking at it here in Delaware, but nationally that is the direction that this is all moving.”

Bob Older, president of the Delaware Small Business Chamber, asked Garvin about the cost of maintenance for electric vehicles.

“That is something that everybody should be worried about,” Older said. “It’s not a matter of the technology isn’t going to come our way. It’s here. It’s now. The cat’s out of the bag. But how are you going to alleviate the economic pain of keeping their fleets alive and keeping the individual in that car safely?”

[READ MORE HERE](#)



SENATE PASSES BAN ON RESTAURANT USE OF PLASTICS

BY SAM HAUT

The Senate on Thursday passed the bill banning the use of single-use foam takeout containers and plastic items in restaurants, but it will allow customers to request a straw.

Senate Bill 51, sponsored by Sen. Trey Paradee, D-Dover, would ban the use of beverage, cocktail picks and sandwich picks made of plastic, but exempts straws attached to an item such as a juice box and straws being used in a hospital or long-term care facility. It would be implemented July 1, 2025 if signed into law. A fiscal note for the bill is not required because it doesn't impact the state budget.

Sen. Nicole Poore, D-Delaware City, who didn't vote for the bill, said that she has a child with special needs who needs to drink with a straw and isn't able to use paper ones.

"Having a child with special needs, I know what it's like that Nicholas can't drink out of a cup," Poore said. "So you do need a straw...Unfortunately, when you have

a child who drools on top of trying to drink out of a straw, it (paper) evaporates pretty quickly."

Poore, along with several other Republicans, including Senate Minority Leader Gerald Hocker, R-Oceanview. and Sen. Minority Whip Brian Pettyjohn, R-Georgetown, expressed concern that the bill would create too many exceptions for companies to still use plastic products. The ban on polystyrene food packaging doesn't apply to pre-packaged food, healthcare providers, fire companies or nonprofit organizations.

Paradee said he wishes the bill went further, that right now he sees it as an important first step and hopes years down the road to easily remove those exceptions.

Pettyjohn brought up Keith Curry, the distribution manager in Delaware for Dart Container, as an expert witness and asked him what impact the bill would have on their company.

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TRADE GROUP: GIVING UNION MEMBERS TAX CREDIT FOR DUES UNFAIR

BY SAM HAUT

The president of a state contractors group says a proposed bill that would allow union members to claim a tax credit for their union dues is unfair. [Senate Bill 72](#), introduced by Sen. Nicole Poore, D-Delaware City, would let people in unions claim up to a \$500 tax credit for union dues.

Edward Capodanno, president of the Associated Builders and Contractors Delaware, said that the bill is unfair because it favors one specific group.

“We’re not real happy about it,” Capodanno said. “You’re going to give a tax credit for someone to pay union dues when you have plenty of companies out there who are paying membership dues to business organizations who aren’t given a similar type of credit

...I don’t see why we’d do it for one specific group if we’re not gonna do it for everybody.”

Efforts were not successful to reach Republican legislators for comment.

Matt Revel, communications director for the Senate Republican caucus, said that they will not be commenting on the bill at this time. Capodanno said his group will be lobbying against the bill.

ABC Delaware operates on the merit shop philosophy, which, according to its website, is about promoting “the best management techniques, the finest craftsmanship, and the most competitive bidding and pricing strategies in the industry, regardless of labor affiliation.”

A merit shop is similar to an open shop, where work-

ers are not required to join a union as a condition of employment. ABC Delaware’s website also states that “more than 87% of the U.S. construction workforce has freely chosen not to join a union.”

If passed, the bill would take effect for the 2024 tax year and has been assigned to the Senate Labor Committee.

Poore initially began asking for cosponsors to the bill in January.

According to the [Bureau of Labor Statistics](#), union membership in Delaware has decreased over the past year, going from representing 9.7% of the workforce in 2021, or about 42,000 workers, to 8.5% in 2022, or about 38,000 workers. Delaware is lower than the national level, where 10.1% of workers are in a union as of 2022, or about 14,285,000 workers, down from 10.3% in 2021, or about 14,012,000 workers.

Capodanno said if all the unions in Delaware get the \$500 tax credit, which includes teachers, building trades and service employee unions, it could cost the state up to \$10 million a year.

“How does that impact the state budget in regards to a fiscal note? So I think we need to take a look at the fiscal note to see exactly what this is gonna cost the state of Delaware from a tax credit standpoint,” Capodanno said.

There currently isn’t a fiscal note for the bill, which has 11 cosponsors and additional sponsors, all of whom are Democrats.

It has been sent to the Senate Labor Committee but is not yet on an agenda.





photo credit: Delaware.gov

Government

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REPUBLICAN LEADERS DRAFT BILLS TO COMBAT EV REGULATIONS

BY SAM HAUT

Delaware Republicans are circulating two bills that seek to limit the Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control's ability to adopt or enforce new regulations related to electric vehicles.

One of the bills would require DNREC to get approval from the legislature before it adopts the new regulations while the other bill would remove DNREC's ability to put out regulations governing vehicle sales. Neither has been filed yet.

The bill to require legislative approval will be filed by Senate Minority Whip Brian Pettyjohn, R-Georgetown. The bill that removes DNREC's ability to regulate vehicle stocking and sales is sponsored by House Minority Leader Ramone, R-Pike Creek.

Enacting either bill would accomplish the goal of reining in DNREC's regulatory authority and returning power to Delawareans, the legislators said in a press release.

"DNREC should be subservient to our citizens, not the other way around," Pettyjohn said. "A couple of things that we cherish here in Delaware are liberty and independence, so much so that it is part of our state motto.

"I do not think there is much liberty or independence in a mandate that is coming from an unelected body here in Delaware, the Department of Natural Resources, pretty much telling people that you have to buy a certain vehicle, even if it does not fit their needs."

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NEEDLE GIVEAWAY CHANGE EASILY PASSES SENATE

BY SAM HAUT

A bill that passed the Senate Thursday would allow the state's sterile needle exchange to give away clean needles, without the client trading in a used one.

Senate Bill 52, sponsored by Sen. Marie Pinkney, D-Bear, would change the Sterile Needle and Syringe Exchange Program into the Sterile Needle and Syringe Service Program and allow people to receive needles on an as needed basis instead of a one-for-one trade. The bill passed along party lines 15 to five, and a Republican amendment was defeated.

A short exchange between Pinkney and Sen. Eric Buckson, R-Dover, revolved around his proposed **Senate**

Amendment 1, which would have limited the agency from providing unlimited needles. Instead, it would allow a one-for-two exchange and limit the number of clean needles per visit to 10. Buckson said that he has spoken to former students of his who have experienced addiction, and they tell him having an unlimited number of needles would be detrimental to addicts.

“Contact is the key. Do the studies. Contact’s the key,” Buckson said. “And when you go 0 for 20, you reduce the number of times that addict comes in contact with the very folks who are capable of helping them.”

Pinkney said research she has seen means that limit-

ing the number of needles per visit would be more harmful.

“I am one who works in grounded research and the research has shown to us and proved to us that a needs-based approach is the most effective method for clean injection use,” she said.

After his amendment failed, Buckson said that he would strike his second proposed amendment, **Senate Amendment 2**, rather than have “any more exercise in futility.” That amendment would have limited the number of needles allowed per visit to 10.

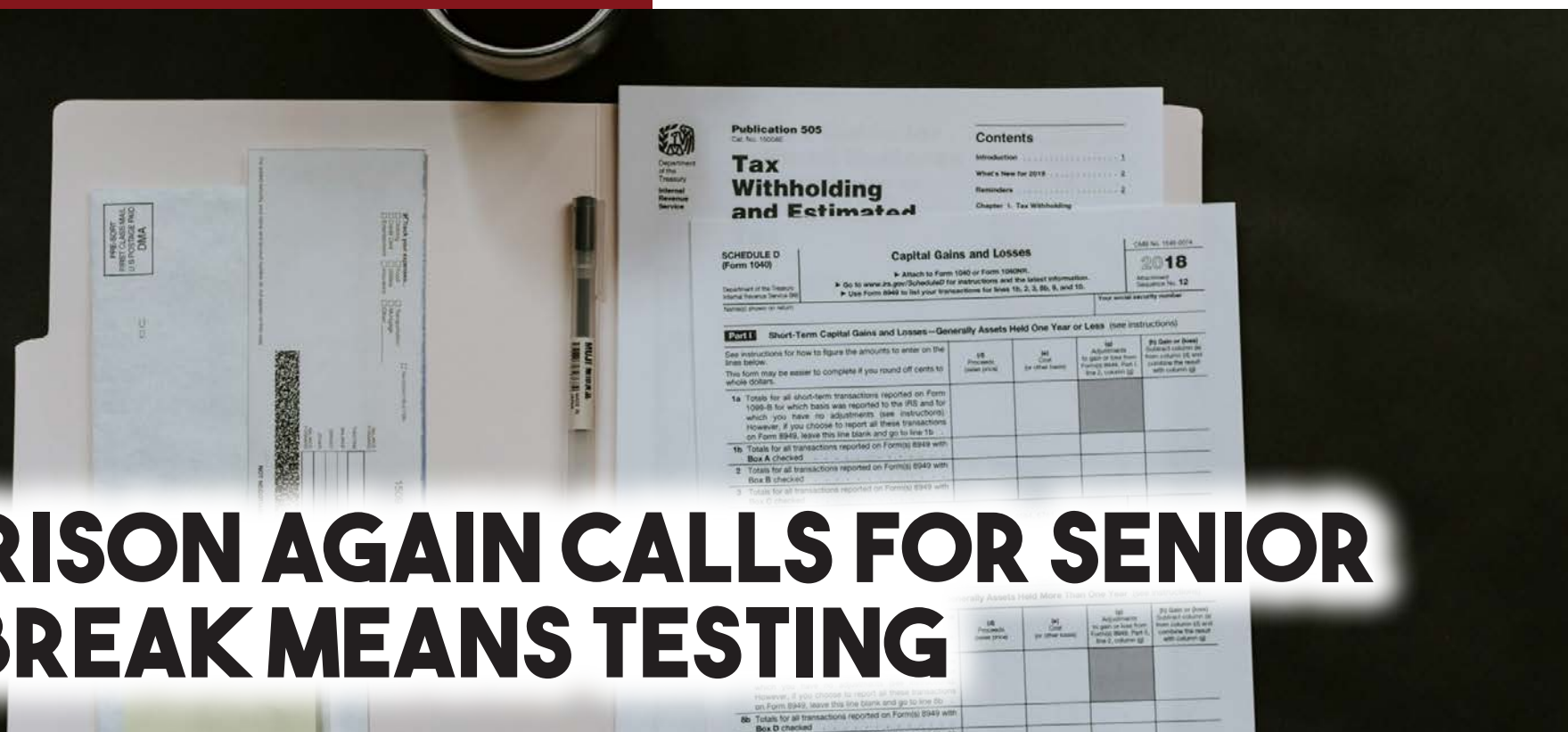
Before the roll call for the bill, Buckson read into the record the story of someone named Amber.

“You give me no cap, you give me the opportunity to get 20 while I’m actively addicted, you’re creating commerce,” Buckson said. “I will barter half of them for the use or supply of a drug or the sale of a needle.’ Her comments, not mine and they should matter in this chamber.”

The bill’s fiscal note estimates it would cost the state \$100,000 in the 2024 fiscal year, \$103,000 in the 2025 fiscal year, and \$106,090 in the 2026 fiscal year. This is based on an estimated 1,150,000 additional needles that must be purchased at a median of nine cents each.

The bill now goes to the House for consideration.





MORRISON AGAIN CALLS FOR SENIOR TAX BREAK MEANS TESTING

BY JAREK RUTZ

Seniors in Delaware may save an additional \$350 in school property taxes next year under a bill that drew lots of discussion in the House Education Committee Wednesday.

House Bill 29, sponsored by Rep. Kevin Hensley, R-Odessa, increases the Senior Real Property Tax credit to \$750 from \$400. That's will counter a raise put in place by the Appropriations Bill for fiscal year 2023, decreasing the credit from \$500 to \$400.

“With inflation and a lot of our seniors on fixed income, we may say that \$350 doesn’t mean a whole lot,” Hensley said. “Well, I’ve heard from 520 of my seniors, and they still come in on a petition I sent out. It means something to them.”

Every legislator has people in their respective district who would benefit from the tax break, he said.

Hensley said residents have shared concerns with him about the ongoing statewide property reassessments, with the assumption that the discount would be more beneficial to those in New Castle County than in Kent and Sussex counties, based on the number of people who would qualify from the exemption.

“I would respectfully suggest that once reassessments are done, I think all of us suspect that that’s likely to result in significant (property value) increases, particularly with our friends in eastern Sussex County,” he said. “So whereas they may not be eligible today, with reassessment, they may very well be eligible.”

If HB 29 passes, it would cost the state \$8.7 million in fiscal year 2024, \$9 million in fiscal year 2025 and \$9.3 million in fiscal year 2026, according to the bill’s fiscal note.

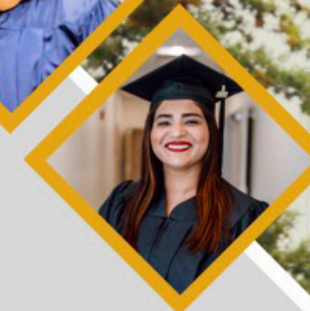
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COMMITTEE OKS BILL REQUIRING INSURANCE COMPANIES TO PAY FOR ABORTIONS

BY SAM HAUT

A bill that would require Medicaid and other health insurance plans to cover abortion services passed the House Health & Human Development Committee with all Democrats and one Republican voting for it.

House Bill 110, sponsored by Rep. Melissa Minor-Brown, D-Newcastle, would make sure that Medicaid and state insurers don't require deductibles, coinsurances, copayments or any other cost-sharing requirement for the termination of a pregnancy.

HB 110 bill passed with six votes in favor and three on its merits. The lone Republican to vote for it was Rep. Mike Smith, R-Pike Creek.

Smith said that because some people get abortions for rape or incest, he wants those people to not have any financial difficulties accessing an abortion.

"That is between that person and God, not me, that person, and God," Smith said. "And I have to look at it

from a policy application, and I do think in this body, we do go through and tell insurance companies what they need to start covering and I think that's a nuanced debate that we're going to continue to do so for the history of time."

Minor-Brown said there will be an amendment introduced at some point to address technical corrections to the bill. She was not specific about what they were.

It is unclear how expansive the bill's definition of a termination of a pregnancy is.

The bill gives an exemption for religious employers who ask for an exclusion based on their "bona fide religious beliefs and practices."

There was extensive public comment for the bill, with 26 people providing comments both in person and online, with 11 speaking against the bill and 14 people speaking in favor of it.



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SENATOR QUESTIONS WHETHER STATE HEALTH CRISIS BOARD MEETS

BY JAREK RUTZ

A bill that would add legislators to the state commission that oversees public health emergencies left one senator confused in the Senate Health and Social Services Committee meeting Wednesday.

Senate Bill 66, sponsored by Sen. Eric Buckson, R-Dover, adds the Senate minority leader and the House minority leader as members of the Public Health Emergency Planning Commission. It works with federal, state, local and private groups to ensure the state is prepared to deal with any public health crisis. The commission now has 14 members.

“In a number of commissions we have representation from the legislature,” said Sen. Stephanie Hansen, D-Middletown. “Is it more common than not that we have a member from all four caucuses that serve on the commission?”

Having all four caucuses represented would include adding a representative from Senate and House Democrats. Buckson, who is in his first term, said he would look into some of the past bills to see if including all

four caucuses is the norm.

Under SB 66, if Delaware is in a state of emergency due to a public health crisis, the commission would need to meet at least every 30 days until the state of emergency is lifted.

Hansen also questioned if the commission has actually met, done any work or submitted any reports to the state. The history of the commission is interesting, Buckson said. It was created by Gov. John Carney’s administration at a request from the CDC, he said.

“There’s a requirement that exists in law right now that says every two years it needs to convene for the simple purpose of maybe just dusting it off in the event that it is needed,” Buckson said. “If you’re asking me if this commission actually met during our most recent public health emergency, my understanding is it has not been meeting.”

Under current law, the commission produced a report on the state of public health in Delaware in 2002, and is required to meet every two years to review their report

and recommendations.

“So have they been providing these reports like they’re supposed to under the code?” Hansen said.

There’s no evidence of that, Buckson said.

“It sounds to me like this is a condition that’s been in place at least in the statute, and it has certain duties and responsibilities that it is supposed to have been meeting in the statute and may not have been meeting those for 20 years,” Hansen said.

“This is probably a bigger issue than adding two new people to the commission. It sounds like it ought to be something that should come up in front of the Sunset Committee.”

No public vote was held on SB 66. Senate committees do not vote in public. They will sign the back of the bill with their votes, which are reported hours later on the state’s bill tracker.

Also in the meeting, Hansen presented **Senate Bill 71**, which would require law-enforcement agencies, the Department of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families, and the Department of Justice to report suspected animal cruelty to the Office of Animal Welfare.

The reports would only be mandated if an employee of the aforementioned agencies discovers an incident of abuse while performing their responsibilities in child welfare cases.

The bill had little discussion, but Hansen pointed out that data shows animal abuse is often a red flag and first sign of other violence in a household, such as child or domestic abuse.

No public vote was taken on SB 71 either.





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SUPERINTENDENTS GET THEIR WAY WITH DAYS-OFF BILL AMENDMENT

BY JAREK RUTZ

Seven of the state’s 19 school district superintendents testified in opposition to a bill that would allow teachers to take personal days without approval.

Senate Bill 61, sponsored by Laura Sturgeon, D-Hockessin and the education committee chair, would allow teachers and other school employees to use five sick days each year to take off for personal reasons, an increase from three they now have.

The bill also allows a school employee to use the one day of leave provided for the funeral of a near relative on the day before or the day after the funeral.

In previous hearings, Republican legislators said the bill takes away local control of school districts.

SUPERINTENDENTS’ VOICE THEIR OPINIONS

In Wednesday’s House Education Committee, **Smyrna School District** Superintendent Susan Brown said that

was an issue that makes her oppose the bill.

“We work directly with teachers and other staff members and employees regarding their absences and to my knowledge, we have not denied any requests to use personal leave,” she said.

She said she would support the bill with an amendment that would preserve the school district’s autonomy to address any teachers’ unique absence request through the district’s negotiated agreement.

Dorrell Green, superintendent of the Red Clay Consolidated School District, said he would support the bill with that amendment as well.

“I still want the same operational mechanisms to be able to work collaboratively with our staff members to address anything that may come up regarding personnel leave,” he said.

Colonial School District Superintendent Jeff Menzer also opposed the bill.

“I support improving working conditions for all of our educators,” he said. “However, language in this bill prevents superintendents from asking for reasons for personal leave, which prevents us engaging in the interactive process to ensure that leave is charged appropriately.”

Rep. Rich Collins, R-Millsboro, once again pointed out that the state has a teacher shortage and one of the worst student achievement and test scores in the country.

“Is this bill going to encourage students to show up for kids for school knowing that their teacher now has five days they can just take off,” he said, “without telling anybody why just bye-bye and not show up? Is that good for education or not?”

Superintendents from Delmar, Cape Henlopen, Appoquinimink and POLYTECH school districts also told the committee Wednesday they were against the bill. They got their wish, and the bill was amended to still allow school leaders to approve and deny personal day requests.

The bill was released with 12 votes and now heads to the House ready list.





BY JAREK RUTZ

Leaders of private christian schools clashed with legislators Wednesday in the Senate Education Committee over a bill that would require licenses and certifications for religious early education centers.

Senate Bill 69, sponsored by Sen. David Wilson, R-Lincoln, would exempt sectarian or religious institutions from the Delaware Child Care Act.

In 2021, the General Assembly enacted **Senate Bill 169**, to update and expand the definition of child care to include early education programs for children below the grade of kindergarten that are operated by public or private schools, including sectarian or religious institutions.

This law takes effect on July 1, 2024.

Wilson, who voted for SB 169, said the law had unintended consequences.

CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS: EXEMPT US FROM CERTIFICATIONS AND LICENSURE

It had unintentionally impacted private schools because now they would have to follow mandates and be licensed by the state, he said

“Please know these private schools do not accept state funds,” he said.

Aaron Coon, head of school at Dover’s **Calvary Christian Academy**, said if the legislators don’t pass SB 69, all 335 students at Calvary will be put at risk of not having a school.

“The facility requirements in the regulation are not possible in our facility, which means we would have to buy a new facility or used facility and make a large move,” he said. “That is not possible right now financially or within the timeframe allotted.”

He also said the regulations in the Delaware Child Care Act conflict with some of Calvary’s religious beliefs as a church and a school, especially in the hiring process. He did not expand on that comment.

“These points among others will force us to close our doors, contributing to Delaware’s child care and unemployment crisis,” he said.

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BILL AIMS TO RECTIFY SCHOOL BOARD CANDIDACY DELAYS

BY JAREK RUTZ

A bill that would eliminate delays to school board candidates' names appearing on Delaware's Department of Elections website was passed by the Delaware House Tuesday.

House Bill 88, sponsored by Rep. Paul Baumbach, D-Newark, would require the state to publicly list school board candidates who are waiting for their background checks to be completed as a "provisional candidate."

Due to a recent **law** that requires candidates to complete a criminal background check and a child registry check, the public didn't know the full list of candidates for this year's election until about three weeks after the May 3 filing deadline.

This created issues of transparency and also cut down on the amount of weeks candidates had to campaign, said Laurisa Schutt, executive director of **First State**

Educate, a local advocacy group.

HB 88 will now head to the Senate Education Committee.

Also Tuesday:

House Bill 47, sponsored by Rep. Bill Bush, D-Dover, increases the minimum amount of capital stock and free surplus an insurer must possess and maintain in order to transact business within the state. This makes insurers more in line with other jurisdictions, the bill reads. HB 47 will be assigned to a Senate committee for discussion.

Senate Bill 33, sponsored by Sen. Kyle Evans Gay, D-Arden, would drop the number of families that Division of Family Services caseworkers have from 18 to 12. The House voted for it unanimously. SB 33 now heads to Gov. John Carney's desk for signature.

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- URSULINE ACADEMY

Senate Bill 60, sponsored by Sen. Laura Sturgeon, D-Hockessin, chair of the Senate Education Committee, would give teachers and other school employees the same protection to be absent without a loss of pay to report to serve on a jury and 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.

Rep. Mike Smith, R-Pike Creek, reminded legislators that this issue is collectively bargained on a local level with school employees and school districts. "We need to have a larger discussion at some point on when we should get involved or when we shouldn't," he said before voting for the bill. It now heads to Carney for his signature.





Sports

photo credit: Nick Halliday



SAINT MARK'S EDGES APPO

BY NICK ALESSANDRINI

It was a beautiful day to kick off the high school baseball season on Delaware Live Sports Tuesday when Appoquinmink traveled to take on Saint Mark's. A battle of two teams with high levels of success the previous few seasons. Junior Devin Walsh got the start for the Spartans and senior Chase Fleming took the hill for the Jaguars.

The Spartans would strike first in the bottom of the second inning as Walsh would help himself out with an RBI on a fielder's choice. Appo and opposing pitcher Fleming would answer in the third with single that would drive in Wyatt Uhde from second to tie the game. In the bottom half of the third, the Spartans would once again take the lead. Garrett Quinn would tag and score on a sac fly from Jameson Summerill, Spartans out in front 3-2.

Chase Thomas and the Jaguars would even things up again in the fifth on a RBI single down the left field line that would score Uhde for the second time. A 2-2 ball

game heading into the bottom half of the sixth when Zach Frame would lead off with a single to right. He would advance on the sac bunt from Summerill and eventually make his way to third with two outs. The go ahead run for the Spartans would cross without another pitch being thrown. A balk on Appoquinmink pitcher Fleming would bring across the game winning run in a 3-2 win for the Spartans.

Garrett Quinn got the win in his two scoreless innings relieving starter Walsh, who went five strong innings. Jameson Summerill had a hit and an RBI. James Bafone a double and a run scored for the Spartans. Cam Coco had two hits, with Wyatt Uhde reaching all three times and scoring twice for the Jaguars. Saint Mark's is back in action Wednesday when they will welcome Sallies at 4 p.m. Next up, the Jaguars will on the road at Conrad Tuesday at 12:00 p.m.



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INSIDE THE CIRCLE: WEEK 3

BY GLENN FRAZER

Saturday's storms "washed out" the softball action to end week two of the 2023 season, but things are starting to take shape as a handful of pitchers are establishing early dominance.

Maybe none has been as impressive as Kaylan Yoder from Delmarva Christian.

In her four games as a first-year senior for the Royals, Yoder has recorded 67 strikeouts and allowed just four hits against some very good competition including Indian River, Smyrna and Mardela, MD.

Yoder has signed to attend and play softball for the Liberty Flames next year.

"Kaylan is another very special young lady. She is a competitor both on and off the field," said Liberty coach Dot Richardson. "She is an extremely hard worker and brings that with her in the circle, outfield and to the plate. She will be an impact player on both sides of the

ball. She is a special lefty pitcher who moves and spins the ball really well. She gets a lot of swings and misses. Kaylan will also be a leader through."

Yoder hails from Greenwood, playing her high school softball as a left-handed pitcher for Delmarva Christian High School. Yoder has also played travel softball for TNT Delaware Bomhardt and Green Hornets Gold 18U. She is also a standout in varsity basketball and volleyball.

Yoder and her 4-0 Royals teammates face off against Madge Layfield and the 3-0 Sussex Central Golden Knights Monday at 4:15 at Georgetown's Del Tech campus in one of the Top 10 featured games-of-the-week. Central also has a showdown with Kylee Hill and 3-1 Laurel on Thursday.

Some other "key" games this week include 3-1 Conrad vs 4-0 Saint Mark's on Tuesday.

JOHN MOLLURA

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The Spartans' Carly Maxton has been "special" this season with 58 strikeouts, and three shutouts. The 3-1 Milford Bucs travel to Camden Tuesday to face the dangerous Peyton Shields and the undefeated Riders.

Wednesday's games will feature 2-0 Appo hosting 3-0 Red Lion, while Caravel (1-0) hosts defending Maryland 1A runner-up Rising Sun under the lights at 6 p.m.

Thursday the unbeaten Spartans from Lake Forest travel to Smyrna (2-2) and Saturday DMA makes the long trip to Laurel.



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