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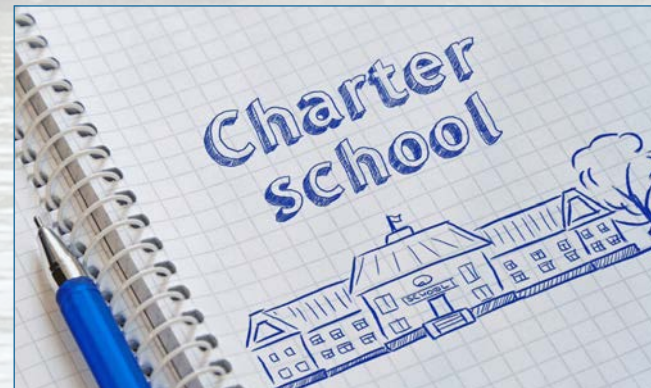
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Surplus Budget for 2024 Still Expected



Possible Change in State Retiree Benefits



State to Change Leader Certifications



photo link: Marcia Reed



Headlines

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DELAWARE STILL EXPECTS \$963.5 SURPLUS FOR 2024 BUDGET

BY BETSY PRICE

Delaware heads toward the final moves in creating its 2024 budget, which starts July 1, with a projected \$963.5 surplus. It will be the third straight year in a row of extraordinary revenues that hit right at \$1 billion, and a turbulent economy it's expected to be the last for a while to reach that stratospheric height.

Revenue estimates rose \$12 million between the March and May meetings of the [Delaware Economic and Financial Advisory Council](#), which is charged with tracking revenue and expenditures to help the General Assembly create the state budget. But what really caught the attention of Senate Minority Whip Brian Pettyjohn, R-Georgetown, a member of DEFAC, was a long discussion about the rising costs of Medicaid.

They are coming as the federal pullback of COVID-19 money and rules means that some people will be kicked

off the rolls, but Delaware has to foot bills once paid by the Feds as the program ratchets down. Costs also are rising because of increased healthcare costs and salaries, said Molly Magarik, secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services.

Nationally, about one-third of the country is on Medicaid, and that includes those who live in poverty, kids, people with significant health or disability issues, and older people who need help with their healthcare. Delaware's rolls include 300,000 people in a state of nearly 1 million.

"Our Medicaid numbers are skyrocketing," Pettyjohn said after the DEFAC revenue and expenditure committees met Monday. "We will have to add at least \$48 million in markup."

Markup is how the legislature refers to the work that the Joint Finance Committee does when it sets actual amounts to budget line items. They work off Gov. John Carney's proposed \$5.5 billion budget, up 7.4% from fiscal 2023's. The committee's markup meetings start May 23 and are public. Go [HERE](#) to listen.

This year's 2023 budget was higher than state rules generally require because of the recent surpluses. Delaware has a built-in budget break, which says the legislature can only appropriate 98 percent of the budget. But because of a budget stabilization fund, state rainy day fund and more, politicians have been able to put more one-time money into projects like water clean-up, schools, healthcare for retirees and more.

At the same time, the state bean counters have been able to put more money back into the budget stabilization fund, which it raided in 2020 as revenues suffered during the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic. This year, DEFAC heard, Delaware will be able to put \$511.3 million out of fiscal year's 645.3 unencumbered funds into the Budget Stabilization Fund, which sits at \$402.6 million. That will give the state a total of \$918.9 million and a huge hedge in the turbulent economic times when predictions of recessions wane and wax like the moon each month.

AMONG BUDGET DETAILS

Among the interesting bits of Monday's DEFAC sub-committee and full committee meetings:

- The outlook didn't change much overall, with a few exceptions.
- Real estate transfer taxes have been down about 30% from December through now, ...

[READ MORE HERE](#)



SCHOOL BOARD ELECTIONS: TURNOUT LOW, BUT RISING IN PLACES

BY JAREK RUTZ

Although last week's [school board elections](#) had extremely low voter turnout, one education group points out this year's numbers rose in many prominent districts.

It has been consistently said that only about 10% of eligible voters hit the polls in school board elections. Of the 11 school districts that had races this year, just one, Delmar, hit that mark, with 10.03% voter turnout. Eight districts had less than 5% voter turnout, and four had less than 3%.

Throughout the First State, 480,742 residents were eligible to vote in this year's elections. Of that, 20,494 votes were cast, only a 4.2% turnout.

In last year's [election](#), 12 districts had races and not a single district reached 8% voter turnout. And nine districts had less than 4% turnout. Voter turnout statewide was also just over 4%.

Laurisa Schutt, executive director of [First State Educate](#), a local education advocacy group, said although the numbers are low, they are increasing in some districts. Delmar's participation rose 197.63%, Seaford went up 132.16%, Appoquinimink went up 100.45%, Red Clay's rose 50.17% and Milford's went up 1.91%. Christina was also up 42% from their last election in 2021.

Three districts had less participation than in 2022's election: Caesar Rodney's voter turnout dropped 9.62%, Smyrna's fell 58.42% and Laurel decreased 6.25%.

"There was no big conclusion to draw from the districts who had more people voting and those that had less," Schutt said. "But all in all, that is very, very few people voting on leaders who have really consequential decisions to make for our communities."

John Marinucci, executive director of the [Delaware School Boards Association](#), said the numbers haven't changed enough to draw conclusions about the state of education in Delaware.

"School board elections have historically had relatively low voter turnout," Marinucci said. "The 2023 school board elections turn-out was, in general, similar to previous years."

The low voter turnout punctuates one of the concerns the School Board Association has with [House Bill 96](#), which would lower the voting age in school board elections from 18 to 16.

"Because most polling places are in schools, 16- and 17-year-old voters would have disproportionately easier and greater access to polling places, should HB 96 pass," Marinucci said. "Students are already in the schools and would only need to walk down the hall in order to vote, but other voters need to travel to the polling places in order to vote."

Due to the historically low voter turnout in school board elections, the 16- and 17-year-old votes can significantly sway, if not determine the election, Marinucci said. HB 96 was tabled by the House Education Committee May 3. If a bill is tabled, it means the committee will take no further action on it at the time, but it could be brought up again later.

Schutt suggested that there needs to be more awareness of the elections.

"We need the state or the DSBA or somebody to say there's a school board election in the state and we need billboards on Route 1, we need billboards on I-95," ...

[READ MORE HERE](#)



REVAMPED SUMMER SCHOOL LETS STUDENTS GET AHEAD, STAY ACTIVE

BY JAREK RUTZ

Summer school once summoned images of unhappy students who had failed a class trudging off to classes to make them up while their friends played in pools.

Not anymore.

Schools now offer extensive summer programming for all ages meant to support the whole student academically, emotionally and socially while catching up or accelerating their learning to get ahead of the curve for the next school year.

This change happened about a decade ago, said Mark Holodick, secretary of the [Delaware Department of Education](#).

“The old summer school when I went to school was like, you failed English, you’re taking English again, and it’s going to cost you half the cost of the original credit,” said Jeff Menzer, superintendent of [Colonial School](#)

District. “That notion of summer school doesn’t exist anymore.”

Districts now, he said, offer a wider array of summer opportunities, which range from credit recovery to 12-month learning to academic enrichment to camps that have educational components to them.

“We are especially concerned about students who have experienced learning loss, so we have to use data wisely to target those students who we know are struggling the most, and we find those students to be in our high needs schools and lower income communities,” Holodick said. “So we have to be incredibly thoughtful and strategic about providing them with summer opportunities that they deserve.”

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Culture

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photo link: Clear Space Theatre Company





CLIFFORD BROWN JAZZ FEST RELEASES LINEUP

BY BETSY PRICE

The Clifford Brown Jazz Festival set for June 21-24 in Rodney Square, will feature headliners Kamasi Washington, Kem, Cory Wong and **Angelique Kidjo**. The show includes a diverse set of musicians ethnically and musically, as well as a nod to history.

“The 2023 Clifford Brown Jazz Festival has been curated to be similar to a lift that is fully lived,” said Tina Betz, director of cultural affairs and fund developer for the city of Wilmington. “At times celebratory and mellow; triumphant and sorrowful; complicated and straight ahead.

“It’s my hope that the 2023 CBJF lineup exhibits what is the most important element of the jazz genre: It’s an art form that is continuously evolving, which is why it’s one of the world’s greatest creative treasures.”

The largest free jazz outdoor festival on the East Coast, the event sponsored by the city of Wilmington, honors Wilmington native and trumpeter Clifford Brown, known as “Brownie.” He died in 1956 at the age of 25 returning from a show. Even though he only had a few years of recordings, many jazz trumpeters still praise his work and his “Joy Spring” and “Daahoud,” have become jazz standards.

All ages are welcome for the concert, and guests are advised to bring lawn chairs or blankets for seating. The square will be lined with food trucks and vendors throughout the festival week.

This year, the city rolled out the names of the performers slowly over a week.

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DARLEY HOUSE ENVISIONED AS HOME FOR CLAYMONT ENTREPRENEURS

BY KEN MAMMARELLA

A new chapter is being written for the [Darley House](#), a Claymont landmark where illustrator Felix Darley in 1862 [created](#) an important archetype of the modern Santa Claus.

The state (which owns the half-acre property, on Philadelphia Pike and Darley Road) and the [Claymont Renaissance Development Corp.](#) (which rents it), are moving forward on plans to renovate the house and enable it to be used as office space or a co-working space for entrepreneurs and startups.

“I hate not seeing the Darley House not used to its potential,” said Brett Saddler, executive director of the CRDC, which focuses on Claymont’s economic development. He is studying the feasibility of each approach.

“Does it make more sense to lease space to startups or develop a co-working space?” he asked, immediately offering this answer: “Whatever would help more with Claymont’s revitalization.”

Unfortunately, the home—built in 1790, with a major addition in 1853—“is in desperate need of repair,” he said. “We are in the process of finally renovating the second floor,” the nonprofit wrote on Facebook. “The walls and ceilings were crumbling, and water was getting in (not to mention critters).”

The [renovations](#) also entail replacing some lawn and landscaping with two more parking spaces. The parking spaces go before the Claymont Design Review Committee, at its May 24 meeting at the Claymont Library.

Saddler expects extra parking to be approved. The interior work fits within zoning and National Register of Historic Places [guidelines](#).

DARLEY HOUSE HISTORY

The Darley House was added to the register in 1973 and is also known as The Wren’s Nest and the Chimneys. It “is a rich architectural creation” in details, the application to the register notes, with Saddler adding that it is a fine example of low Victorian design.

Darley’s work on Clement Moore’s “A Visit From St. Nicholas,” also known as “The Night Before Christmas,” includes a drawing of St. Nicholas and his sleigh racing past the Darley House.

The first floor now has an office, a conference room, front and back parlors, a kitchen, two restrooms and a wraparound porch, Saddler said. The second floor would have room for five offices, he said. The third floor and basement are for storage. The state is paying for renovations and he expects the work to be done by next spring.

The nonprofit will sublease the newly done space to tenants. Saddler gave up his office three years ago to rent it to attorney [Gregory F. Birney](#). Saddler now works out of the conference room. The house also hosts weekly art classes and other activities.

Delaware bought the property in 2004 and did major renovations in 2010. In 2020, the CRDC proposed making the second floor an incubator space or apartments. (The house was at one point was operated as a bed and breakfast.) The apartments were not architecturally feasible, a study concluded.

[READ MORE HERE](#)



NEW YORK MAN SETS NEW DELAWARE FISHING RECORD

BY JAKE ELMER

For the second year in a row, a Delaware **record** has been broken for the same kind of fish. James Milano of North Babylon, NY, caught a record-breaking tautog measuring 34 inches and weighing in at 22 pounds, 14.4 ounces while fishing over a wreck in the Atlantic Ocean east of Indian River Inlet. It was 1 pound, 6.7 ounces heavier than the previous state record tautog caught by Brent Wiest in May 2022.

Two consecutive years with record-breaking tautog caught is a sign of an improving fishery for the species in Delaware, according to the Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control.

Milano was fishing aboard the No Limit charter boat with Capt. Jon Azato. Efforts were not successful to reach Milano for comment.

The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Council says tautog are a slow-growing species.

Milano was able to catch the record-breaking tautog just before the seasonal closure of the fishery. Tautog season closed on May 15 and anglers will have to wait until July 1 to target the fish again.

Tautog must be at least 16 inches to keep and anglers are limited to four per day. Tautog are structure-oriented fish, so anglers targeting them can fish over artificial reefs, jetties or wrecks. They are notorious bait-stealers, so it takes quick reflexes to land one.

While tautog are typically caught between 13 and 20 inches, there is always the possibility of hooking into a trophy like Milano. Tautog are also called blackfish and are considered a great eating fish with nice white-to-grayish meat. Many cooks bake it, but some prefer to eat it raw as sushi.



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Business

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photo credit: fauxels / PEXELS





BY BETSY PRICE

CorriXR Therapeutics was given the “Most Promising New Company” award by attendees at the inaugural Delaware’s DNA 2023 Life Science Conference. Sponsored by **Delaware Bio**, the conference attracted 300 people to network and hear panels about industry trends.

CorriXR, the first spin-out of ChristianaCare’s Gene Editing Institute, is an oncology-focused biotherapeutics development company with what they describe as a ground-breaking gene editing platform technology. The startup was competing with four others for the title by presenting a three-minute pitch about what they were doing and how they were doing it to the conference audience, who voted for the winner.

Also in the running were:

- **Cosmos Pharmaceuticals** – The medical device company focuses on the relationship between medication adherence and patient outcomes.
- **Hartlon** – The start-up is developing a resorbable vascular stent designed to salvage limbs that are at risk

CANCER-FOCUSED CORRIXR THERAPEUTICS WINS 'MOST PROMISING' AWARD

of amputation by restoring blood flow below the knee.

- **BioCurie** – BioCurie is developing an AI software platform that will revolutionize cell and gene therapy (CGT) production to make these lifesaving therapies faster, better and cheaper.
- **Cellergy Pharma** – Cellergy Pharma develops novel immunotherapies for the treatment of severe allergic diseases.
- **Innovative Precision Health** – Innovative Precision Health (IPH) is a healthcare technology company that provides comprehensive solutions for precision health. Its platform integrates data collection, analysis and interpretation and is implemented nationwide.
- **Nitro Biosciences** – Nitro Biosciences is a startup from the University of Delaware developing a live bacterial vaccine platform to target diseases/antigens normally hidden from the immune system.

As top vote getter, CorriXR will receive a \$2,500 prize and runners-up Cosmos and Hartlon each will receive \$1,000.

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STATE DIVISION OF SMALL BUSINESS HIGHLIGHTS SUPPORT PROGRAMS

BY SAM HAUT

With the Delaware House and Senate [declaring](#) May Small Business Month, the state agency focused on highlighting ways it can help.

According to [annual reports](#) by the Division of Small Business, which was established in 2018, there were then 24,782 small businesses in the state. Small businesses are defined as a company with less than 100 employees. That increased to 24,851 in 2019, 24,873 in 2020, 25,282 in 2021, and 27,111 in 2022.

Those numbers come from the U.S. Census Bureau, which publishes data on the number of businesses two years after the fact, so the most recent numbers the division published are from 2020.

During that same period, the number of jobs and wages also increased, going from around 220,000 workers and \$10 billion in wages in 2018 to 239,512 jobs and \$13.8 billion in wages in 2022.

Many times, First State small businesses need the help to continue thriving. According to a [LendingTree analysis](#) of Bureau of Labor Statistics data, businesses in Delaware have a 22.5% failure rate after one year, the 23rd highest in the country. They also have a 55% failure rate after five years, the third highest in the country, and a 67.8% failure rate after 10 years, the 10th highest in the country.

Laura Wisler, deputy director of the Division of Small

Business, said they can do a lot to help.

“There’s no wrong door, whether they’re coming in federally through the [Small Business Administration], or the SBDC Small Business Development Center,” Wisler said. “We work a lot with the local towns in the main street programs. So if there’s a small business in Main Street, they can also come to us for any kind of help. So I don’t have an exact number. But we do the best we can to expand our net.”

COVID-19 has had a negative impact on businesses, in general, she noted, and that led to some revamping.

“There was a lot of resiliency that came out of that as well,” Wisler said. “Businesses had to think outside of the box and transition...We had restaurants that had to expand their footprint to outdoors and transition to to-go sales. And we had a lot of our small business transition to online and just rethinking to stay alive.”

As part of the [State Small Business Credit Initiative](#), Wisler said the division received about \$20 million in federal funding for four programs to help small businesses, with two more installments of \$20 million to be disbursed once the division uses 80% of its first \$20 million. Those programs include:

- The Accelerator and Seed Capital Program involves the division working with up to two fund managers to give money to certain very early or idea-stage start-ups, typically STEM focused and ones with 10 or fewer employees.
- The Early-Stage Venture Capital Program involves the division working with fund managers to provide seed and early-stage venture capital to Delaware-based companies that are most likely STEM focused.

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photo credit: Jorge Zapata / PEXELS



Food & Dining

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BY PAM GEORGE

Nothing causes a ripple through a dining room quite like a seafood tower—a veritable feast for the eyes. Even from across the room, you can spot the curled pink shrimp, the lobster claw and the glistening oysters lolling on a bed of ice. A staple of high-end dining, seafood towers are also popping up in casual restaurants.

One reason could be America's love of seafood. In 2020, we consumed 2.3 billion pounds, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Raw bars are becoming more common, especially at the beach. The rise of social media could also play a part. Food porn isn't alluring if it isn't attractive, and nothing makes diners grab their phone like a tower's opulent presentation.

Modern versions draw inspiration from different ethnic cuisines. For example, consider ceviche, crudo and sushi. Regardless, the key to a successful tower is a balance of textures and flavors.

FINDING A SEAFOOD TOWER

Just in time for summer, here are 10 restaurants that feature a chilled seafood tower. (Call for prices as seafood costs fluctuate.)

MORE THAN RAW APPEAL: 10 SEAFOOD TOWERS TO TRY

Bardea Steak

Seafood towers are a luxury item, which is why they pair so well with steak. In downtown Wilmington, Bardea's platter includes oysters, shrimp, lobster, yellowfin tuna and halibut.

Tonic Seafood & Steak

With seafood and steak as the star attractions, you better believe this downtown Wilmington has a tower. Ingredients include tuna tartare, jumbo lump crab, shrimp cocktails and six oysters.

Banks' Seafood Kitchen & Raw Bar

Chef David Leo Banks is a culinary master in the kitchen, but he lets customers have it their way at the raw bar, and the options include ceviche and tartare.

Big Fish Grill on the Riverfront

The restaurant has sizes for two or four people, and selections include raw oysters and clams, Gulf shrimp, and steamed and chilled lobster.

George & Sons Seafood Market & Oyster House

The family-run establishment arranges 24 oysters, 12 shrimp and a split lobster on its tower. Want more? The Poseidon includes all that plus ceviche and crudo.

Lewes Oyster House

This Second Street newcomer's two tower sizes are named for landmarks in nearby Cape Henlopen State Park, a former World War II Army base. The Observatory features 12 oysters, tuna tartar and four pieces each of clams, crab cocktail claws and shrimp cocktail. The larger Fort Miles has 18 oysters, tuna tartare, four shrimp, and crab claws—and a split 1½-pound lobster.

The Crab House

The Rehoboth-area restaurant on Route 1 calls its offering a platter, not a tower, but let's avoid splitting hairs. You still get a boatload of seafood, including a dozen shrimp and six each of raw clams and oysters—plus half a chilled Maine lobster.

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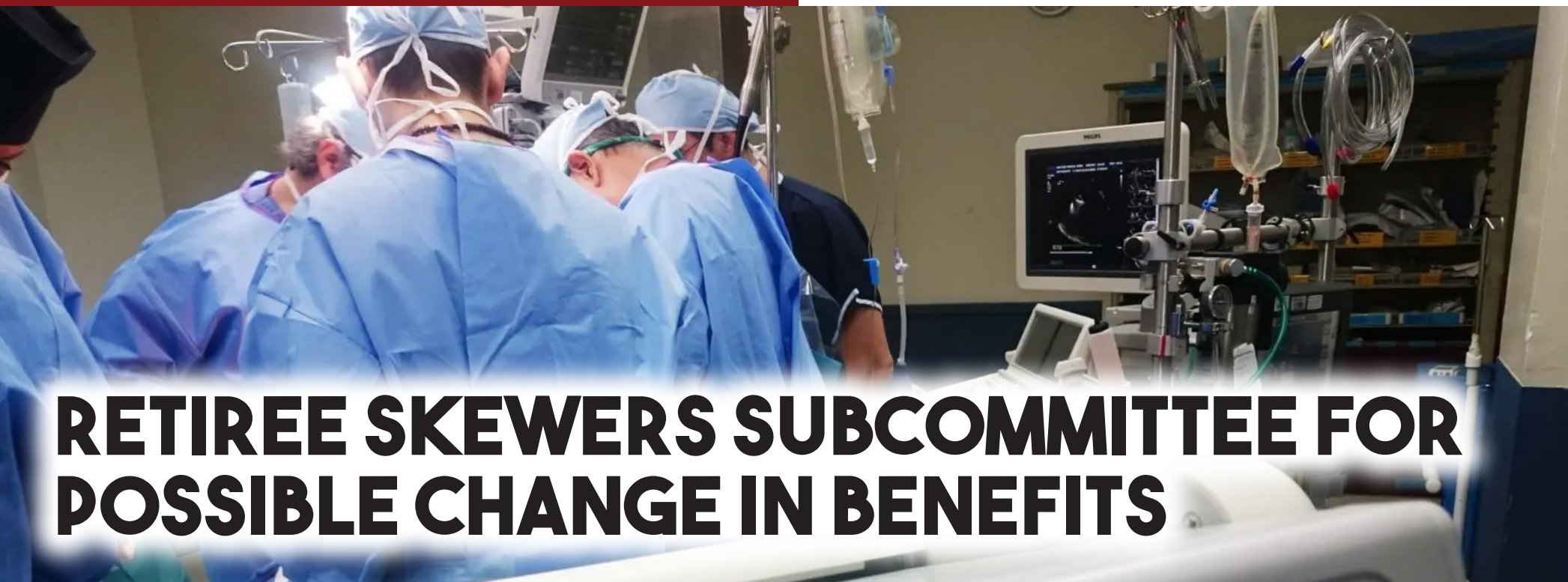


photo credit: Delaware.gov

Government

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RETIREE SKEWERS SUBCOMMITTEE FOR POSSIBLE CHANGE IN BENEFITS

BY SAM HAUT

A retiree’s voice broke as she recounted to the SEBC Retiree Benefits Subcommittee on Friday what it would mean for her health coverage to change.

“About 10 days ago, my husband was diagnosed with cancer,” Diana Noonan said in the Zoom call. “He had scheduled for surgery next week. And the word cancer is daunting, and it’s also been frightening, and it’s rocked our family. I cannot imagine how much worse it would be if we had to worry about coinsurances and paying out of pocket prior to many of the surgeries and treatments involved. We simply do not have the funds.”

Noonan said it’s immoral for the subcommittee to consider taking away any of their healthcare benefits.

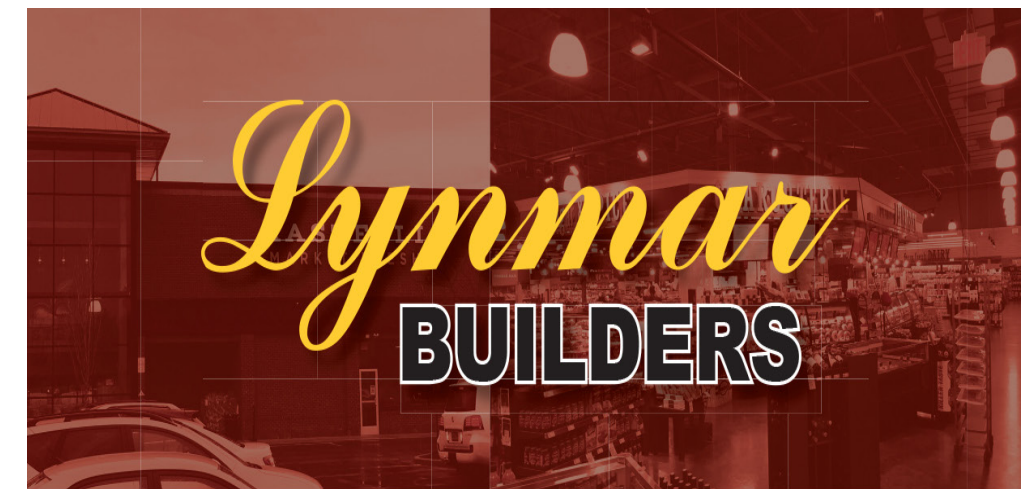
“I cannot imagine that this committee can begin to believe that it is anything but immoral and unethical to take any level of medical benefits away from us at this point in our lives,” Noonan said. “Especially when for

over 30 years we had been told that while salaries were not great, our retirement benefits would be...We are people who have age but we still have value. We are parents and grandparents and we have busy lives.”

Prior to Noonan’s comments, the subcommittee had been discussing how they can lower the state’s unfunded liability. That liability comes from the post employment benefits that are paid out of what’s called the OPEB Trust Fund. It includes retiree benefits such as health-care, life insurance and disability, but not pensions. Money for those benefits will need to be accrued, or the state will not be able to support those benefits.

The state currently has an \$8.3 billion shortfall in that unfunded liability as of July 1, 2022, and estimates that shortfall will increase to \$20.7 billion by 2042 if nothing is done.

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REPUBLICANS POINT OUT HIGH COSTS, CHANCE OF FIRE IN EV DEBATE

BY SAM HAUT

Republicans led a charge Thursday to derail a bill that requires new homes and multi-family dwellings to be wired for electric vehicles, a move that Democrats say will help ensure the sale of more cars and help the environment. They failed.

Senate Substitute 1 for Senate Bill 103, sponsored by Sen. Sarah McBride, D-Wilmington, would require all new single-family homes after 2024 and multi-family homes after 2025 be equipped with a conduit for installing an electric vehicle charger. While the bill is similar to the original Senate Bill 103, it clarifies the definition multi-family dwelling to only be for nontransient hotels, boarding houses, and motels, removes voltage from the definition of electric vehicle parking spaces for clarity, specifies that final site plans be submitted, not

just approved, by Jan 1, 2025, for multi-family homes, and clarifies that a charger can be installed in an unassigned parking space.

Republicans argued that charging cars in homes creates a fire hazard, that the state is ignoring people who don't want one and that installing home chargers is expensive. Senate Minority Leader Sen. Gerald Hocker, R-Ocean View, said that he's heard from firefighters who are against the bill.

"The fire service is totally, 100% against charging any vehicles in any residential areas, like a garage or a building...they have a fire on a charger on electric vehicles, that fire will not be able to be put out and there will be deaths," Hocker said. "I heard that presentation by a fireman."

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HOUSE COMMITTEE APPROVES LGBTQ PANIC DEFENSE BAN

BY SAM HAUT

It's called the gay panic defense: Someone reacts with force or violence when he or she realizes that another person is of a certain sexual orientation or gender identity. Delaware legislators are moving to eliminate that as a defense in Delaware courts.

The House Judiciary Committee approved [House Bill 142](#), sponsored by Rep. Eric Morrison, D-Glasgow, to eliminate the move called an LGBTQ panic defense. It passed with five in favor and one against. It wasn't clear who voted no. HB 142 also would move the definition of sexual orientation and gender identity from the hate crimes section of the Delaware code to the general criminal code.

Morrison said the defense more recently has been used for transgender victims, whereas in the past it was

used more for gay victims.

"The defense is a legal strategy asking a jury to find that a victim's sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression, is to blame for a defendant's violent reaction up to, and including murder," Morrison said.

Mark Purpura, president of the Equality Delaware Foundation Board of Directors, said the gay panic defense isn't used on its own.

"It's important to understand it's not a stand-alone defense," Purpura said. "It's used in conjunction with other defenses like self defense, provocation, and diminished capacity...the victim's sexual orientation or gender identity is raised as a way to buttress those other defenses." Purpura said that he is not aware of the defense being used in Delaware.

Morrison cited several examples of the defense being used in some form, including the cases of Matthew Shepard, Scott Amedure and Daniel Spencer.

Shepard was killed in 1998 by Aaron McKinney and Russell Henderson, and during the trial, McKinney's lawyer [cited](#) gay panic as a reason for killing Shepard. The judge rejected the defense because temporary insanity or diminished capacity defenses were banned in Wyoming. Both McKinney and Henderson are serving life sentences, with McKinney guilty of felony murder, aggravated robbery and kidnapping while Henderson was guilty of murder and kidnapping.

Amedure was [killed](#) in 1995 by Jonathan Schmitz and during the trial, lawyers for Schmitz argued that part of the reason Schmitz killed Amedure was because he had confessed to being Schmitz's secret admirer on a talk show three days before the murder. Schmitz was sentenced to 25 to 50 years in prison for second degree murder, and was released in 2017 on parole.

Spencer was killed in 2015 by James Miller after Miller [claimed](#) he was acting in self-defense because Spencer was making a sexual pass at him. Miller received six months in prison and 10 years probation for criminally negligent homicide.

California, Colorado, Connecticut, Hawaii, Illinois, Maine, Maryland, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Nevada, Oregon, Rhode Island, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, and the District of Columbia have all passed similar legislation.

Rep. Jeffrey Spiegelman, R-Townsend/Hartly, asked why they are singling out one group instead of having the defense apply to all protected classes.

[READ MORE HERE](#)

LEGISLATORS CALLED TRAITORS, LAWBREAKERS IN GUN PERMIT DEBATE

BY SAM HAUT

More than 35 people, including National Rifle Association members, shooting survivors, libertarians and gun violence activists spoke passionately about a proposed handgun permitting bill Wednesday.

Senate Substitute 1 for Senate Bill 2, sponsored by Senate Majority Whip Elizabeth Lockman, D-Wilmington, would require a person to acquire a permit before they can purchase a handgun, but exempting active or retired police officers, and people with concealed carry permits.

William Sharp of Sussex County said that all the lawmakers who vote for the handgun bill are traitors to the country.

“At this time, I have no other options but to charge these individuals who have submitted this legislation with crimes against the people of Delaware and the

Constitution of the United States,” Sharp said. “The first charge is treason. The second is...violation of oath of office.”

Avery Jones, who was at the Christiana Mall during the shooting, said the bill would help to prevent people from getting firearms who shouldn't have them.

“I would love to see psychologists in schools. But yeah, right now we don't have that,” Jones said. “I think that this bill in particular is the most proactive step to keeping firearms out of the hands of individuals that do not need them.”

Larry Mayo, with the Institute of the Constitution, said the representatives don't have the right to pass the handgun bill.

“Can any member of this body produce your permit or license to create legislation outside of your constitu-

tional authority? Question two, can a court created by Article IV (of the U.S. Constitution) give you that permit or license? The obvious answer to both of these questions is no, which means what you're doing is unlawful. You're not making a law. You're breaking law.”

The House Judiciary Committee voted one in favor and five on its merits for the bill on Wednesday. The bill already passed the Senate along party lines on May 2.

House Majority Whip Melissa Minor-Brown, D-New Castle South, said she wanted to clarify a few things about what the bill doesn't do.

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JOHN MOLLURA

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EARN MORE THAN \$100,000? BILL WILL RAISE YOUR INCOME TAXES

BY JAREK RUTZ

A bill that raises how much income tax must be paid by those who make more than \$100,000 drew frustration from Republicans Wednesday, but passed to the full House.

House Bill 128, sponsored by Rep. Paul Baumbach, D-Newark, chairman of the House Revenue and Finance Committee, creates a new tax bracket requiring those who make more than \$100,000 a year to pay 6.9% of taxable income. Right now, anyone making more than \$60,000 pays 6.6%.

It also will slightly lower taxes for those making \$5,000 or less; those making between \$20,000 and \$25,000; and those making between \$60,000 and \$100,000.

The new brackets would be:

- 0% of taxable income less than \$2,000
- 1.9% of taxable income in excess of \$2,000, but not in excess of \$5,000
- 3.9% of taxable income in excess of \$5,000, but not in excess of \$10,000
- 4.8% of taxable income in excess of \$10,000, but not in excess of \$25,000
- 5.55% of taxable income in excess of \$25,000, but not in excess of \$60,000
- 6.6% of taxable income in excess of \$60,000, but not in excess of \$100,000
- 6.9% of taxable income in excess of \$100,000

The current tax bracket, which is in law from taxable years beginning after Dec. 31, 2013 to before Jan. 1 2024 is:

- 0% of taxable income less than \$2,000
- 2.2% of taxable income in excess of \$2,000 but not in excess of \$5,000
- 3.9% of taxable income in excess of \$5,000 but not in excess of \$10,000
- 4.8% of taxable income in excess of \$10,000 but not in excess of \$20,000
- 5.2% of taxable income in excess of \$20,000 but not in excess of \$25,000
- 5.55% of taxable income in excess of \$25,000 but not in excess of \$60,000
- 6.6% of taxable income in excess of \$60,000

Rep. Mike Smith, R-Pike Creek, said he was against the bill, but eventually voted it through on its merits.

“We’re coming off the third year of record surplus in dollars so I don’t really see the need for it,” he said.

Baumbach told the revenue committee that raising the taxable income above \$100,000 from 6.6% to 6.9% is a “modest increase.”

“This is designed, among other things, to raise some revenues,” he said. “It’s projected to raise approximately \$6.9 million for the upcoming fiscal year, and \$18.1 million for fiscal 25.” He pointed out that his bill maintains the six taxable brackets which the Department of Finance indicated they prefer, as well as having all tax rates under 7%.

Rep. Ron Gray, R-Selbyville, said he would rather the lower income brackets be reduced than increasing the taxable income for those making more than \$100,000. He suggested an amendment, which Baumbach fought.

[READ MORE HERE](#)

SENATE COMMITTEE MOVES ALONG ENERGY OFFICE BILL

BY SAM HAUT

A Senate committee has pushed along a bill that would expand the powers of the State Energy Office, but delayed hearing a bill that would restrict DNREC's powers over electric vehicles. The Senate Environment, Energy & Transportation Committee voted Tuesday to send [Senate Bill 7](#) to the Senate Finance Committee for further vetting.

While Senate committees do not take votes in public, the bill tracker said it passed with five yes votes and one on its merits.

Sponsored by Sen. Stephanie Hansen, D-Middletown, SB 7 would give the State Energy Office in DNREC's Division of Climate, Coastal and Energy the right to oversee Delaware's greenhouse gas emissions and implement the state's [Climate Action Plan](#). As hard as that office works, Hansen said, it's not equipped to handle everything it should. SB 7 will give them

additional marching orders to collaborate and provide guidance, she said.

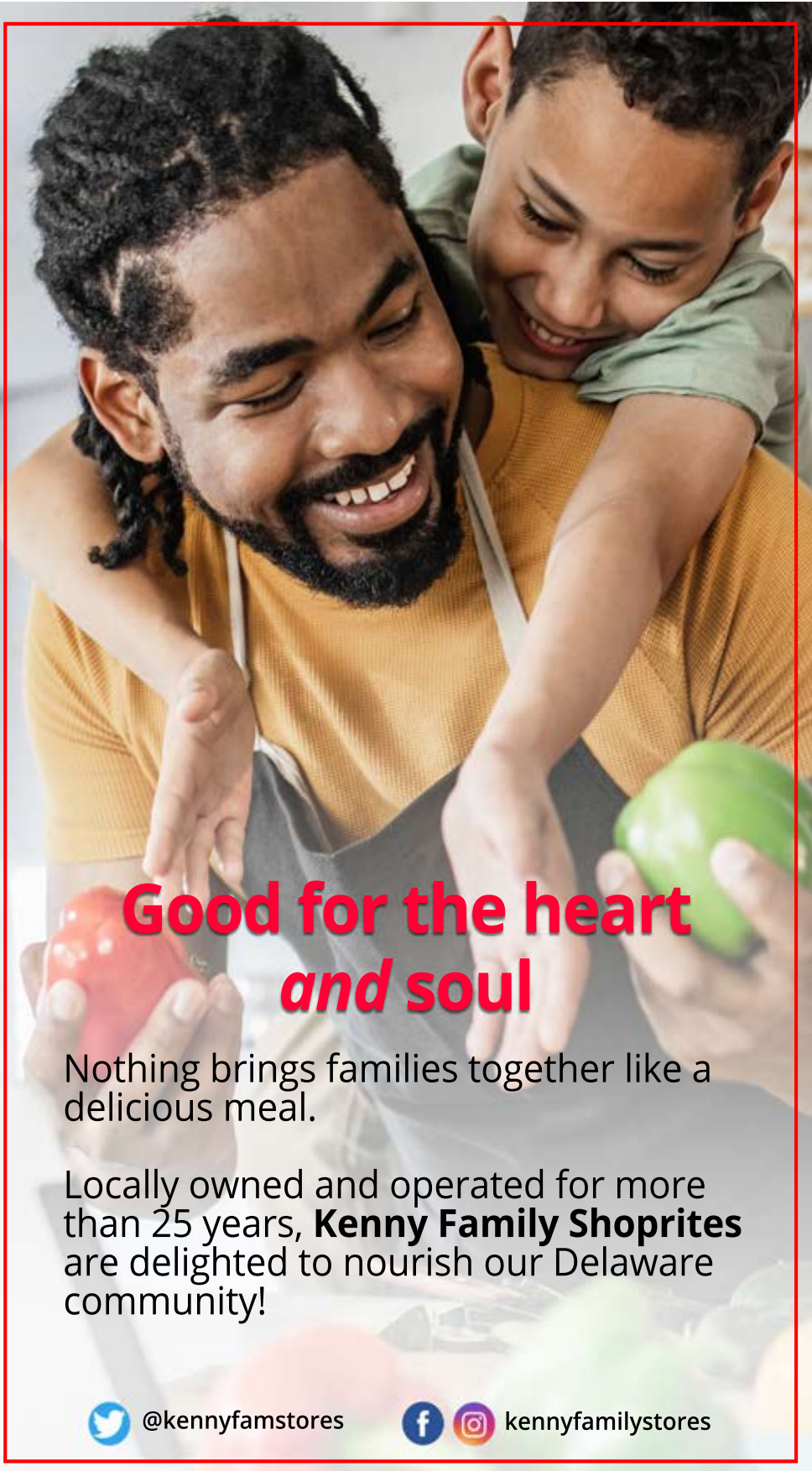
The bill's financial note says the move would cost the state \$462,478 in ongoing costs and \$1,021,000 in one-time costs for the 2024 fiscal year, \$623,498 in the 2025 fiscal year in ongoing costs, and \$635,664 in the 2026 fiscal year in ongoing costs.

Not everyone is thrilled with the idea.

David Stevenson, director of the Center for Energy & Environment at the Caesar Rodney Institute, said he believes nuclear power should be considered as a way to help reduce carbon emissions.

"I had suggested in our laundry list of things we should be looking at to reduce carbon dioxide emissions, that we included nuclear energy and carbon capture," Stevenson said.

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LEGALIZING ASSISTED SUICIDE SPARKS DEBATE IN DOVER. AGAIN.

BY JAREK RUTZ

Moral, ethical and religious opinions were at the heart of a lengthy debate on assisted suicide that had nearly 40 public commentors in the House Health & Human Development Committee Tuesday.

House Bill 140, sponsored by Rep. Paul Baumbach, D-Newark, permits a terminally ill adult resident of Delaware to request and self-administer medication to end the individual's life in a humane and dignified manner. The bill was introduced last year, but didn't survive the session.

Under HB 140, both the individual's attending physician or advanced practice registered nurse and a consulting physician or nurse would have to agree on an individual's diagnosis and prognosis and believe the

individual has decision-making capacity, is making an informed decision and is acting voluntarily.

Rep. Ruth Briggs King, R-Georgetown, who was against the bill, was among those who thought the bill would prematurely end some people's lives, saying citing religious belief and prayer sometimes prolongs life.

"My father was diagnosed with lung cancer and was given 18 months," Briggs King said. "He lived 18 years."

Rep. Mike Smith, R-Pike Creek, questioned a major talking point for proponents of the bill, which was that 70% of Delawareans support assisted suicide and that is consistent nationally across surveys. He said the survey question, which asked whether a health care provider honoring a terminally ill patient's request to end his or

her life should be subject to criminal or civil penalties.

"Doctors are not trained in this. Doctors are trained to treat disease," he said. "They're not trained to teach you when to die or how to die."

Rep. Stell Parker Selby, D-Milton, said she received dozens of emails from Sussex County residents that were in opposition to the bill. She said when her mother died, she and her family agreed that she wouldn't go on any machines or have doctors give her anything, and most people in Sussex agree that they want to die without any assistance.

One common form of assisted suicide that was discussed was a powder that is mixed with a small amount of water or other solution that a patient drinks and typically dies within a few hours. However, the powder often causes nausea and patients can vomit it up causing a delayed reaction.

Doctors from out-of-state testified that they give patients medications to treat nausea before giving them the solution to ensure it works as it's supposed to, with a painless death a few hours later. One speaker said 80% of patients who take the solution die within one hour.

Smith and some others pushed the fact that patients must be in the right state of mind while making the decision and even suggested mandating a psychiatric evaluation prior to making a decision.

"The physicians regularly are assessing the mental capability of their patients," Baumbach said.

The idea of assisted suicide legislation has been thrown around in the General Assembly for nearly a decade without success.

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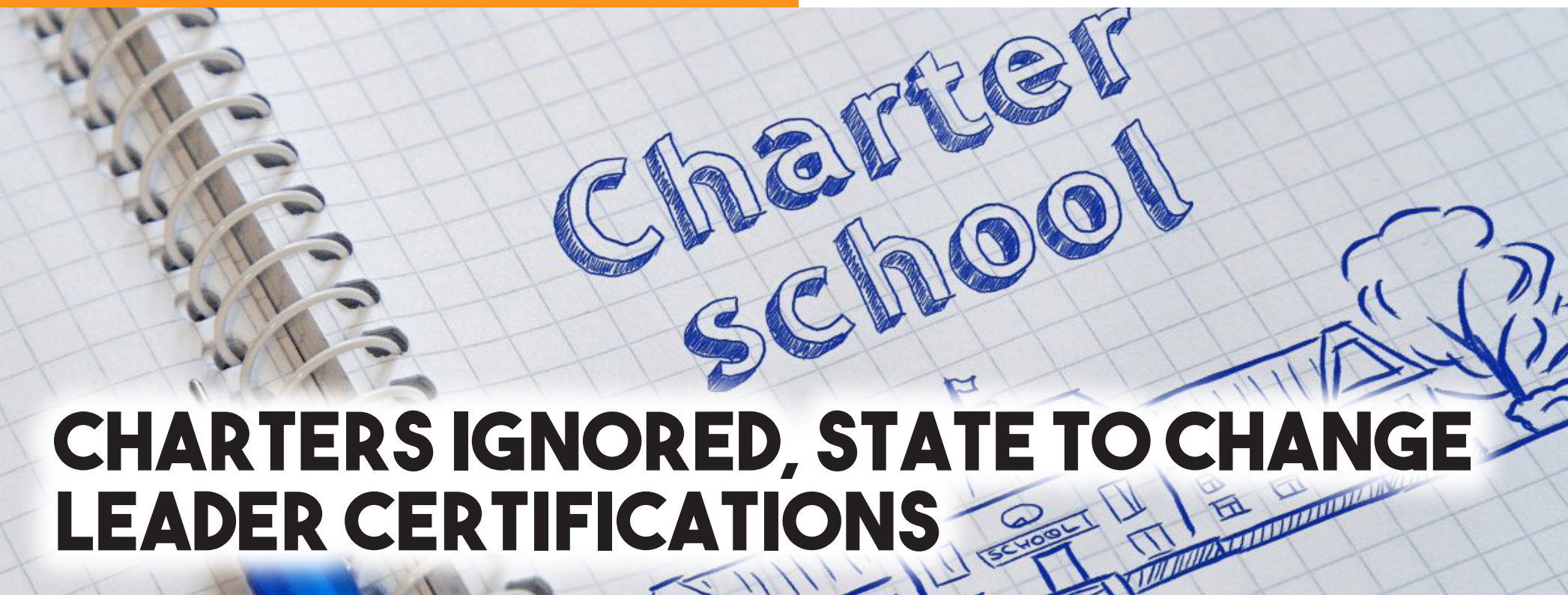
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CHARTERS IGNORED, STATE TO CHANGE LEADER CERTIFICATIONS

BY JAREK RUTZ

Despite months of outcry from the charter school community, the Delaware State Board of Education voted Thursday night to create a pathway for charter school leaders to be certified under the same requirements as district leaders.

It's a move that Kendall Massett, executive director of the [Delaware Charter Schools Network](#), previously called offensive, degrading, ridiculous and infuriatingly insulting when Regulation 1596 was introduced in February. The pool of charter leaders is a mix of those fully licensed and certified, some who are licensed but not certified as leaders, and some who have no licensure and certification.

“Your voice matters’ is what I tell my children, the other 18,220 charter students, their parents, charter teachers, staff, leaders, board members and the community,” she said. “They used their voices and the State

Board of Education, except for Reverend Powell, chose not to listen.”

The issue stems from the State Board of Education’s February meeting when Education Secretary Mark Holodick said Delaware wants to make sure charter school heads are certified and licensed in accordance with the requirements of district school leaders.

For certification, charter school leaders may either:

- Enroll in a traditional or alternative route to certification program that leads to traditional administrator certification and complete the program within three years.
- Earn approval for a digital portfolio submitted to an external vendor who will review work samples to measure competency and alignment to professional standards for educational leaders.

[READ MORE HERE](#)





DSU RAISING TUITION BY \$1,500 A YEAR STARTING IN FALL

BY JAREK RUTZ

Students of Delaware State University can expect to pay \$1,500 more for tuition next year, the HBCU announced Thursday. To ensure long-term financial stability, DSU is raising tuition \$750 a semester, but students whose families earn less than \$30,000 a year will actually get a decreased tuition, although the university has yet to announce what the discount will be.

Ben Addi, DSU’s chief financial officer, said the move assists in “making the thoughtful decisions necessary to continue our growth trajectory while delivering on our promises to our community.”

Increased revenue will help the university upgrade classrooms and residence halls and also allow it to invest in additional academic programs.

Antonio Boyle, DSU’s vice president for strategic

enrollment management pointed out that DSU is 37% less expensive than the next least-expensive four-year university in the state and 73% less than the highest.

The **Inspire Scholarship** will not be affected. It’s a full-tuition scholarship that prospective students can apply for if they graduated from a Delaware high school with at least a 2.75 grade point average and no serious behavioral problems or criminal charges. In 2022, 67% of incoming Delaware freshmen were Inspire Scholars.

Tuition expenses for students with Presidential Scholarships or fully-funded athletic scholarships will not change.

DSU will modify its scholarship formula to ensure the lowest-resource families will experience a reduction of up to \$1,000 in total cost of attendance.

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The announcement comes a day after the University of Delaware’s board of trustees voted to increase tuition by 5% next school year.

DSU President Tony Allen said the most critical aspect of the college’s mission is to extend opportunities to more students to prepare them for a faster, smaller and more connected world.

In-state students will pay \$10,953 a year in tuition and fees and \$20,875 for out-of-state students, not including housing or a meal plan. Housing costs at the university range from \$5,818 to \$12,768 per year, and meal plan options range from \$1,265.38 a year to \$5,059.33.

For more information on tuition and fees at DSU, click [HERE](#).





UD TO RAISE TUITION 5%, EVEN WITH SURPRISE SURPLUS

BY JAREK RUTZ

The University of Delaware's board of trustees voted Tuesday to raise tuition 5% for the 2023-2024 school year for all graduate and undergraduate students. In the board's semi-annual meeting, it announced the cost hikes were a result of general inflation and increased costs of operations.

For in-state residents, tuition will be \$14,040 a year and for non-residents it will be \$37,680. Those wanting to live and dine on campus will pay another \$15,176 a year. UD will also increase educator's compensation by 4%.

The university has 329 active construction projects, and its capital project budget for next fiscal year will be \$149.8 million. Construction on Building X, \$60 mil-

lion, and east campus utility work, \$17 million, make up a large portion of UD's budget.

UD President Dennis Assanis also announced an unexpected operating budget surplus of \$25 million. He said the school expected a \$5 million surplus. UD's operating margin was between 2% and 3%, slightly higher than expected, although Assanis wants next year's operating margin to be around 5%.

He said the university has hired 90 faculty members for next year, and is still looking to hire 58 additional faculty members by fall. Although UD will have 43 fewer doctoral students next year, dropping from 499 to 455, it will have 353 more students in master's programs, rising from 953 to 1,296.

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Its incoming freshman class of undergraduates is expected to be 4,335, a few hundred less than 2022's incoming class of 4,829. Among those, 1,250 of the 4,335 first-years are Delawareans, 997 less than last year's freshman class, and 1,052 of the 4,335 are from minority backgrounds. Assanis did not mention the projected total enrollment for 2023-2024, although this year UD has said it has a total enrollment of 23,257.

Watch the full meeting [HERE](#).





FOOD SERVICE WORKERS, PARAPROFESSIONALS COULD GET RAISES

BY JAREK RUTZ

Food service managers, lunch cooks and paraprofessionals in Delaware schools could soon see a bump in their paychecks. The Public Education Compensation Committee Monday night discussed increasing food service managers' and lunch cooks' pay 2.5% starting in the 2024-2025 school year. It did not vote to recommend the raises, but is expected to at its June 12 meeting.

This would be in addition to the 3% general increase for all educators for the 2023-2024 school year that is included in Gov. John Carney's recommended budget.

Depending on the hours worked, position and number of students a school's cafeteria serves, food service workers would make between \$15.01 per hour or up to \$28,880 a year.

The proposal would cost the state, which funds 73% of a food service manager's pay, \$20,385,412.

The 15-person committee was formed at the beginning of this school year to make recommendations to the state on how to raise pay in the education system to better compete regionally, especially for teachers as the nation battles a teacher shortage.

Notably, the state has been pressured by Maryland, which passed a law that would bring the starting salaries of teachers to \$60,000 by the 2026-2027 school year.

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