



Health Care Recap

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SESSION STATUS

At 12:59 p.m. on Wednesday, September 25, 2019 the Senate stands in recess until Monday, October 21, 2019 at 1:00 p.m., unless sooner recalled by the President Pro Tempore.

At 4:02 p.m. on Wednesday, September 25, 2019 the House stands adjourned until Monday, October 21, 2019 at 1:00 p.m., unless sooner recalled by the Speaker.

UPCOMING SESSION DAYS

House

Oct. 21, 22, 23, 28, 29, 30
Nov. 12, 13, 14, 18, 19, 20
Dec. 9, 10, 11, 16, 17, 18

Senate

Oct. 21, 22, 23, 28, 29, 30
Nov. 18, 19, 20
Dec. 16, 17, 18



Around the Rotunda

LEGISLATORS, ADVOCATES SUPPORT ADULT CHANGING STATIONS

By Robert Cochran, Pennsylvania Legislative Services | September 23, 2019

Legislators joined disability advocates at the Capitol today in support of [House Bill 117](#), which requires adult changing stations at state-owned buildings and certain places of public accommodation.

Rep. Dan Miller (D-Allegheny), the legislation’s prime sponsor, noted the 29th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), describing the federal law as a “game changer” for those in the disability community.

“But the Americans with Disabilities Act didn’t solve everything,” he added, suggesting more needs to be done to guarantee accommodations for those with disabilities. Rep. Miller said if adult changing tables are not addressed, “we are essentially telling a large portion of this country that they will have to have limited exposure, limited experiences [and] limited opportunities to enjoy life.”

Rep. Miller remarked that it is “not acceptable” for the commonwealth not to expand adult changing tables in Pennsylvania.

Christina Abernethy, family support and community engagement specialist for Achieving True Self, described her experience of traveling with a son with special needs who cannot safely utilize standard restrooms independently. Abernethy described her family’s difficulties with traveling, stating that for individuals with special needs who need restroom assistance, finding adult changing facilities is troublesome.

Abernethy stated that without adult changing facilities, individuals with special needs must change in cars or public restroom floors. She stated that current changing facilities are only for babies and small toddlers, not adults. Abernethy said she organized with the community to spread awareness regarding the need for adult changing facilities.

HB 117 “is designed to create inclusive and accessible restrooms in places of large capacity,” said Abernethy. She added that the bill would not affect small businesses, and that the legislation helps promote privacy and human dignity.

Sen. Pam Iovino (D-Allegheny) stated that hearing anecdotes similar to Abernethy’s story brought her attention to the issue of adult changing facilities. She said that the ADA did not fix everything, and that this legislation is needed to support the disability community. She stated that the elderly, disabled veterans and the medically ill would be impacted by this legislation.

Sen. Camera Bartolotta (R-Washington) said that her near-fatal car accident subjected her to a wheelchair for a year. She said that prior to the ADA, accomplishing college classes was difficult without public accommodations for wheelchairs. She stated that despite recent accomplishments in disability equality, public accommodations for restroom facilities have not been achieved.

Sen. Bartolotta said that the Pittsburgh International Airport established [Presley’s Place](#) as



a sensory room for those with autism as well as adult changing facilities. “I can’t even imagine the lives that have been changed,” she said.

Sherri Landis, executive director, The Arc of Pennsylvania, said that among the needs of the disability community, accessible restroom facilities and adult changing facilities are “always overlooked.” She said traveling is a hassle for families that need restroom accommodations because public buildings are not required to have adult changing facilities. She indicated this shortage restricts families from visiting popular locations.

“HB 117 is a common-sense bill that addresses these issues facing the disability community by requiring state-owned buildings and certain places of public accommodation to install and maintain at least one changing station,” Landis said. She added that adult changing facilities reduce the risk of injury to caretakers and allows assistance to take place in a hygienic area and provides for privacy.

Catherine Hughes, director of family support and community engagement for Achieving True Self, stated that she is an advocate for numerous causes and her personal experiences brought her to support HB 117. She stated that she had felt guilt watching an adult being changed on a public restroom floor rather than an adult changing station. Hughes added that her son with autism had difficulties using the restroom, and without proper accommodations, he needed to be changed on the floor. Hughes said her father also needed an adult changing facility due to his age and medical conditions.

Rep. Miller stated that the government has established public accommodations previously during passage of the ADA and that he hopes this legislation will pass this session.

###

SUPPORTERS OF DYSLEXIA AWARENESS DISCUSS EXPANDING RESOURCES FOR CHILDREN WITH DYSLEXIA

By Emily Mistishen, Pennsylvania Legislative Services | September 23, 2019

Legislators and advocates gathered in the East Wing Rotunda Monday to call for an increase in resources for teachers and for students with dyslexia.

Daphne Uliana, president of Dyslexia and Literacy Network, remarked that her hope is that every state legislator is aware of the number of families that are struggling to find help and resources for dyslexia. She called for legislation that will raise awareness for teachers and school administrators about the learning disorder and the methods of educating students who struggle with it. She explained that the theme of the event is “Share Your Story” or “My Dyslexia Story.”

Uliana related her own experience with dyslexia, stating that she was diagnosed late in high school and was unable to receive much support for it. Later on, both of her sons were diagnosed with the reading disability, she continued, which began her real journey with dyslexia. She indicated her sons were sent to boarding school and that it was a necessary sacrifice in order for her kids to receive the support they needed, which included things like audio books and extra time on tests. Her sons are doing well, she noted, but she opined that it required a sacrifice that no family should have to make. “I’m here today...because I don’t feel like it should matter where you live or how much money you have,” she asserted. “A child with dyslexia, no matter what, should get the help and support they need.”

Christine Craig Seppi, president of the Pennsylvania Branch of the International Dyslexia Association (PBIDA), noted that PBIDA will be holding their 41st annual conference focused on reading and literacy in the Philadelphia area on October 19. She explained that the goal of the conference is to reach more people regarding information about dyslexia. Regarding her own personal experience with dyslexia, Seppi remarked that her son was diagnosed with dyslexia but now has a master’s degree from Carnegie Mellon University and is currently working. “That’s the end of the story,” she acknowledged, “but the beginning was not so pretty.” She highlighted the difficulties their family faced in finding the right tutors and programs to help him. His teachers cared about his education, she remarked, but they were not taught the proper method of educating students



with the learning disorder. After several years of tutoring utilizing the Orton-Gillingham method, which is a “systematic multisensory approach to reading training”, her son was able to get the education he needed, she said. “But not everyone in our state has access to this kind of tutoring,” she remarked.

Seppi went on to explain that she trained to become an Orton-Gillingham therapist due to her experience and that she continues “teaching children who are failed by our schools to read.” She expressed her hope that teachers and parents will gain more awareness about dyslexia and will learn the necessary methods to teach those who have it. The methods for teaching those with dyslexia are helpful for all kids, she noted, but are essential for those who have it. She stated that dyslexia is a neurological condition, cannot be fixed with glasses, and that the children who have it are not less intelligent or lazier. She further outlined how dyslexia affects the way a person connects a sound to a symbol, and that a child with dyslexia may be intelligent in other areas but will struggle with learning to read. She cited that one in five students have dyslexia and urged for more education for teachers, particularly in phonemic awareness, phonics, and multisensory words such as prefixes, suffixes, and roots.

Seppi referenced Act 69 of 2014, which established the Dyslexia Screening and Early Literacy Intervention Pilot Program and worked with eight school districts to train teachers. The pilot is being expanded to 15 school districts due to its success, she added, and she encouraged further expansion of the program. “No parent should have to go through what I did,” she asserted. “No child should be left out because of not being able to learn to read.” She cautioned that there are many students being left behind because they are not taught appropriately.

Hollie Woodard, member of Decoding Dyslexia, described how she received an email from one of her son’s second-grade teachers telling her that she should read to her son more. She went on to explain that her son was already exposed to a large number of books and reading materials and that he was “going into first grade as an emerging reader.” However, she learned that her son was dyslexic, resulting in difficulty with finding the proper support for him. She illustrated how she received her second master’s degree in special education and volunteers with a number of organizations to help support her son. She expressed hope for support for teachers and additional government oversight for a “path to literacy for all of Pennsylvania’s children.”

Kate Mayer, co-founder of Everyone Reads T/E (ERTE), explained that ERTE works to teach students to read with as little emotional impact as possible and to provide teachers with necessary resources. She stated that students in Tredyffrin Easttown with dyslexia fall further behind because of a lack of proper education. She continued on to describe how of her five children, two are dyslexic and two more have the possibility of being dyslexic. When her first child was born, she said, she did everything she was told to do for reading education. However, when he began going to public school, he developed anxiety and nightmares from his experience, and the school district was unable to help him, she indicated. In order to help students with dyslexia, Mayer encouraged dynamic relations, utilizing best practices that currently exist, and acknowledging that “shame is the enemy of change.” She affirmed, “We cannot allow past failures to prevent future success.” She noted that teachers and parents want to help students learn to read but are not equipped with the right training to do so. She pointed to her son’s tutors that currently help him and urged for additional support for students with dyslexia.

Rosette Roth, co-founder of Decoding Dyslexia, remarked that she is at the event because dyslexia “is not always properly diagnosed or remediated in our public schools.” She described how DDPA works to raise awareness about the reading disability and how Pennsylvania was the second state to have Decoding Dyslexia. She praised Rep. Ed Neilson (D-Philadelphia) and his work with Act 69 of 2014, highlighting the benefits of the pilot program. She urged for the expansion of the program.

Sen. Mario Scavello (R-Monroe) indicated that he consistently speaks with Secretary of Education Pedro Rivera about expanding the program. He highlighted the benefits of the program and called for its expansion.

Rep. Neilson lauded Sen. Scavello for his help with legislation. He asserted that the topic should not be partisan and that it



is about children and the future. He pointed to the issue as an “easy issue” and argued that the screening program should be available in every school. He called for early diagnosis for dyslexia and thanked those present for their support.

###

LEGISLATORS AND ADVOCATES HIGHLIGHT DR. BAXTER’S “DON’T WAIT TOUR”

By Sheri Melnick, Pennsylvania Legislative Services | September 23, 2019

Legislators were joined by advocates this morning to highlight Dr. Ric Baxter’s “Don’t Wait Tour,” a bicycle tour through Pennsylvania to raise awareness of end-of-life care.

Sen. Judy Schwank (D-Berks) welcomed Dr. Baxter and commented that he has spent most of September biking around the state to spread the message that “you should not wait to do what you are passionate about.”

Sen. Schwank explained that Dr. Baxter advocates for hospice care for his terminally ill patients to live their “best life” for what remains of it. She noted that hospice care and palliative care are not about “curing illnesses” but caring for patients in the manner they want. Sen. Schwank remarked that hospice and palliative care serve about 1.5 million people across the U.S. and are designed to offer people the treatment they deserve as their lives come to an end. She remarked that hospice does not necessarily mean that it is the end and said that people go into hospice care for a variety of reasons. Sen. Schwank asserted that she never considered hospice care until her mother was ill. She said, “I am on a mission so that I can inform other people about hospice and help the experts talk about this issue.”

Sen. Art Haywood (D-Montgomery) asserted that as a culture, “we are not comfortable with the end.” He explained that increasing education to make end-of-life decisions will enable people to have a “more comfortable passing.” He noted that he has written his obituary and expressed his support of Dr. Baxter’s ride.

Rev. Anne G. Huey, spiritual services manager, St. Luke’s Hospice, referenced a Buddhist teacher who encouraged people not to wait to express “how you want to be defined in the world.” She noted that since September 2, 2019, Dr. Baxter has been riding across Pennsylvania while embracing that philosophy. She remarked that Dr. Baxter spoke about a message he received from Dr. Phillip Rodgers, associate professor of family and internal medicine, University of Michigan Family Medicine, who reminded doctors that “we have accomplished what we have by showing up, and standing up, and now speaking up.” She asserted that when Dr. Baxter completes the bicycle riding tour, he will have ridden about 1,000 miles to “take hospice care to every corner of Pennsylvania.”

Dr. Ric Baxter explained that his bike ride was a “personal mission” to look at what was really meaningful to him and to take part in the message of “don’t wait.” He noted that he has ridden 790 miles and climbed over 30,000 feet, which has allowed him to see Pennsylvania. Dr. Baxter remarked on the “genuine kindness” of people he has met, as well as the interest and support. He stated that the work hospice and palliative care workers do is “hard and important,” and asserted that he wants to change the focus so that hospice and palliative care is not “just about dying [and] to make it about living.” He said, “What hospice provides is the team, the support; to have a safe space for people to live as well as they can while they are dying and to find joy in the midst of that sadness.” Dr. Baxter remarked that palliative care “is about finding and maximizing the quality of your life while living with a serious illness” and urged people not to wait until it is too late to do that.

Dr. Baxter expressed the hope that his mission across the state will help provide a basic education about palliative and end-of-life care. He explained that this education should be part of nursing, medical, and seminary education and “is something that we all need to embrace.” He said, “I am blessed to have the opportunity to do this. It has been an incredible ride.”

Sen. Schwank thanked Dr. Baxter for his efforts to educate those across Pennsylvania about hospice and palliative care.



Committee News

Senate Aging and Youth Committee

9/23/19, 12:30 p.m., Room 8E-A, East Wing

By Harrison Cann, Pennsylvania Legislative Services

The committee met to consider legislation.

[HB 775 Diamond, Russ](#) - (PN 848) Amends the State Lottery Law, in pharmaceutical assistance for the elderly, adding language requiring the Department of Human Services to establish a method to be used at least once each calendar month to cross-reference the department's roster of claimants with the death records information from the Department of Health. Further provides a claimant who is found to have a death record shall be subject to an immediate cancellation of benefits. Effective in 60 days. - The bill was unanimously **reported as committed**.

Rep. Russ Diamond (R-Lebanon) explained that his bill would require the Department of Aging to communicate on a monthly basis with the Department of Health regarding death records to ensure their mailing lists are up to date. Rep. Diamond commented that over a year after his father's death, he received a letter stating that his father was eligible for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. He added that ensuring mailing lists are updated will prevent potential cases of fraud and reduce the amount of unnecessary mailings on behalf of the taxpayers.

[SB 819 Mensch, Bob](#) - (PN 1126) Amends the Older Adults Protective Services Act, extensively revising provisions on older adults protective services relating to preliminary provisions, administration, criminal history for employees, reporting suspected abuse by employees and miscellaneous provisions; and imposing penalties. The legislation repeals Chapters 1, 3, 5, 6 and 51 of the act, and replaces the statute with language which addresses the constitutionality concern of regarding offenses listed in the act which result in a lifetime employment ban without further evaluation. The legislation streamlines communication between organizations and agencies, addresses financial exploitation by permitting financial institutions to intervene in suspected financial abuse, establishes mandatory reporters for reporting elder abuse, and provides for employment practices that are safe for elder care organizations. The legislation establishes civil and criminal penalties and liabilities, Section 202-A of the act shall take effect in one year; the remainder of this act shall take effect immediately. - The bill was unanimously **reported as committed**.

Sen. Bob Mensch (R-Montgomery) explained that his bill would provide further protections for seniors in preventing both physical and financial abuse. He stated that his bill implements different levels of employment suspension for cases of abuse and theft depending on the severity of the offense.

Chairman John DiSanto (R-Dauphin) expressed support for the bill, referencing his experience dealing with aging parents and the need for this type of legislation.

Sen. Baker asked how the bill's requirement for worker background checks would address cases involving financial institutions. Sen. Mensch responded that there is a federal requirement for financial institution training to identify suspicious activity and that he has talked to financial institutions in Pennsylvania about adopting the federal reporting guidelines.



House Appropriations Committee

9/23/19, 1:27 p.m., Room 140 Main Capitol Building

By Jeff Cox, Pennsylvania Legislative Services

The committee met to consider four bills.

[HB 1662 DiGirolamo, Gene](#) - (PN 2207) Amends the Methadone Death and Incident Review Act, incorporating Buprenorphine-related deaths into the act, including in the title, short title, definitions, the Methadone Death and Incident Review Team, team duties, review procedures and confidentiality. The legislation also removes the term narcotic treatment and replaces it with opioids-assisted treatment throughout the act. Effective in 60 days. - The bill was unanimously **reported as committed**.

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House Health Committee

9/23/19, 1:30 p.m., Room G-50, Irvis Office Building

By Mike Howells, Pennsylvania Legislative Services

The committee met to consider legislation.

[SB 314 Baker, Lisa](#) - (PN 292) The Pennsylvania Rural Health Redesign Center Authority Act establishes the Pennsylvania Rural Health Redesign Center Authority and the Pennsylvania Rural Health Redesign Center Fund. Effective in 180 days. - The bill was **reported as committed** by a vote of 24-1 with Representative Pam DeLissio (D-Philadelphia) voting in the negative.

Chairman Kathy Rapp (R-Warren) related several meetings between herself and Department of Health (DOH) Secretary Dr. Rachel Levine on the legislation and indicated DOH is supportive.

Rep. DeLissio said she is not very well versed in the plan but that she is all for something that lends predictability to managing costs and delivering care to citizens, particularly in rural areas. She asked about an associated \$25 million innovation grant and its timeline.

Executive Director Whitney Metzler noted «rural» is defined in statute and confirmed six hospitals are currently participating in the program, with that number expected to rise.

DOH Executive Deputy Secretary Sarah Boateng clarified there are up to 30 hospitals at least to be recruited, with 13 more in the current year. She added the Rural Health Redesign Center is interested in working with all rural hospitals and health providers.

Rep. DeLissio asked how the program will be funded and admitted a lack of clarity on the issue currently leads her to be a no vote. Boateng said the initial seed money was a \$25 million grant from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), and the second year of the dollars are being used now. She explained they go back each year to CMS to request funding, and the long-term sustainable funding model is a consulting-based approach. She said DOH can consult to other states and collect fees for their expertise, and the center could do the same thing. She said many other states are interested and have reached out to learn more about what Pennsylvania is doing. «The work that Pennsylvania is doing really is laying the groundwork for the national approach to making sure that rural hospitals can stay in their communities,» she said.

Rep. Mary Jo Daley (D-Montgomery) said it sounds like the measure is unique in the country. Boateng confirmed it is a first-in-the-nation approach to paying hospitals through a global budget. She added the legislation needs to be passed to ensure an independent body can administer the work.

Rep. Jerry Knowles (R-Schuylkill) asked for clarification that the governor and the administration support the measure but



Democratic members oppose it. Metzler said the administration supports it. Minority Chairman Dan Frankel (D-Allegheny) said Democrats think the measure is an important one but have genuine concerns over its sustainability. He said relying on consulting fees and grants from foundations, typically short-term in nature, «gives us some pause.» He said nevertheless he will support the bill and urged his colleagues to do the same.

Boateng said she appreciates that support and opined the Rural Redesign Health Center is aimed at addressing the long-term sustainability of rural health care. Without the passage of the bill, she said, the years left on the grant will go away before its work can be fully ramped up. She said they want to get it passed this fall so that the center has a year or two with grant funding to then stabilize its long-term model.

[HB 419 Donatucci, Maria](#) - (PN 408) Amends the Pennsylvania Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Screening Act stipulating that eligibility for the Pennsylvania Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Screening Program is women age 30 to 65 (changed from 40 to 49) Effective in 60 days. - The bill was unanimously **reported as committed**.

Rep. Maria Donatucci (D-Philadelphia) said the bill expands breast cancer screenings in an attempt to further improve early detection and successful treatment of breast cancer, regardless of an individual's finances.

Metzler said the bill is identical to House Bill 562, passed unanimously last session.

Rep. DeLissio asked if there is any data supporting the expansion of the age range for screenings. Minority Executive Director Erika Fricke said currently DOH is paying for cervical screening for women from age 21 and up. Metzler said there have been changes in the last five years on the recommendations for screenings.

Rep. DeLissio asked if it is on-demand or whether someone has to fall into a high-risk category. Metzler indicated the same population still applies. Rep. Donatucci said she knows of personal cases of women in their twenties diagnosed with cancer. Chairman Rapp agreed it is an important bill.

[HR 464 Brown, Rosemary](#) - (PN 2410) Resolution recognizing the month of September 2019 as Polycystic Kidney Awareness Month in Pennsylvania. - The resolution was unanimously **reported as amended**.

[A02818](#) by Frankel, contains a technical correction. The amendment was unanimously **adopted**.

[HR 436 Donatucci, Maria](#) - (PN 2383) Resolution recognizing the month of October 2019 as "National Breast Cancer Awareness Month" in Pennsylvania and October 18, 2019, as "National Mammography Day" in Pennsylvania. - The resolution was unanimously **reported as amended**.

[HR 441 Culver, Lynda](#) - (PN 2399) Resolution designating the month of September 2019 as « Histiocytosis Awareness Month» in Pennsylvania. - The resolution was unanimously **reported as amended**.

[HR 463 Benninghoff, Kerry](#) - (PN 2409) Resolution designating the month of September 2019 as Childhood Cancer Awareness Month in Pennsylvania. - The resolution was unanimously **reported as amended**.

[HR 465 Youngblood, Rosita](#) - (PN 2411) Resolution designating the week of September 23 through 29, 2019, as Diaper Need Awareness Week in Pennsylvania. - The resolution was unanimously **reported as amended**.

[HR 468 Gaydos, Valerie \(F\)](#) - (PN 2420) Resolution designating the month of September 2019 as Self-Care Awareness Month. - The resolution was unanimously **reported as amended**.

[HR 475 Cruz, Angel](#) - (PN 2427) Resolution observing the month of September 2019 as Newborn Screening Awareness Month. - The resolution was unanimously **reported as amended**.



[HR 480 Cruz, Angel](#) - (PN 2456) Resolution designating the month of September 2019 as “Krabbe Disease Awareness Month» in Pennsylvania. - The resolution was unanimously **reported as amended**.

[HR 481 Cruz, Angel](#) - (PN 2457) Resolution designating the month of September 2019 as “Leukodystrophy Awareness Month» in Pennsylvania. - The resolution was unanimously **reported as amended**.

[HR 484 Rapp, Kathy](#) - (PN 2460) Resolution recognizing the week of September 15 through 21, 2019, as “National Medicare Education Week” in Pennsylvania. - The resolution was unanimously **reported as amended**.

[HR 485 Emrick, Joe](#) - (PN 2461) Resolution designating October 11, 2019, as “Amplified Musculoskeletal Pain Syndrome Awareness Day” in Pennsylvania. - The resolution was unanimously **reported as amended**.

[HR 510 Emrick, Joe](#) - (PN 2520) Resolution designating October 9, 2019, as PANS/PANDAS Awareness Day and recognizing the need to raise awareness of pediatric acute-onset neuropsychiatric syndrome and pediatric autoimmune neuropsychiatric disorders. - The resolution was unanimously **reported as amended**.

[HR 525 Rapp, Kathy](#) - (PN 2549) Resolution designating September 24, 2019, as the day to commemorate “United States National Health IT Week-September 23, 2019, to September 27, 2019” in Pennsylvania. - The resolution was unanimously **reported as amended**.

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Senate Appropriations Committee

9/23/19, 3:55 p.m., Rules Committee Conference Room, Main Capitol

By Sheri Melnick, Pennsylvania Legislative Services

The committee met to consider legislation.

[SB 439 Regan, Mike](#) - (PN 427) Amends the Enforcement Office Disability Benefits Law further providing for disability benefits and for definitions. The following are added to the scope of the law: probation officers employed by a participating county; campus police officers employed by a participating university; commissioned police officers employed by the Department of Corrections, Bureau of Investigations and Intelligence; DCNR rangers, DCNR ranger supervisors, DCNR ranger operations specialists and DCNR ranger trainees employed by the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources; members of the Fort Indiantown Gap Police; investigative staff of the Office of Inspector General; members of the Allegheny County Port Authority Police; members of the Allegheny County Housing Authority Police; and corrections officers or jail guards employed by a participating county and whose principal duty is the care, custody and control of inmates. Effective in 60 days. (Prior Printer Number: 417) - The bill was unanimously **reported as committed**.

Sen. Mike Regan (R-Cumberland) noted that the Enforcement Officer Disability Benefits Law is a benefit that is offered for Pennsylvania’s law enforcement officers. He asserted that the law states that officers injured in the line of duty should be paid their full salary until their injuries cease. He indicated that the bill adds a new group of people who qualify for the benefit.

Chairman Patrick Browne (R-Lehigh) noted that the fiscal impact for state employees would be \$323,000, while the fiscal impact for county employees would potentially be \$3.5 million.

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House Judiciary Committee

9/24/19, 9:00 a.m., Room 60 East Wing

By Mike Howells, Pennsylvania Legislative Services

The committee met to consider legislation.

[HB 165 Donatucci, Maria](#) - (PN 139) Amends Title 18 of the Pennsylvania Consolidated Statutes, in firearms and other dangerous articles, further providing for definitions, for sale or transfer of firearms and for Pennsylvania State Police and providing for self-exclusion from purchasing a firearm. The bill establishes that the Pennsylvania State Police shall establish and maintain a list of persons self-excluded from purchasing a firearm or receiving a firearm by transfer. Effective in 60 days. - The bill was **reported as committed** by a vote of 22 to 3, with Representatives Dowling, Topper, and Justin Walsh (R-Westmoreland) voting in the negative.

Rep. Maria Donatucci (D-Philadelphia) said the bill would establish a voluntary firearm self-exclusion list, and indicated it is aimed at decreasing the rate of suicides in the state, many of which are carried out with the use of firearms.

Dymek said that under the bill, prior to the expiration of a person's time under a self-exclusion period, state police would send a note to the person stating that they will be automatically removed from the list, with instructions included on how to remain on it if they choose.

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Senate Judiciary Committee

9/24/19, 9:00 a.m., Hearing Room 1, North Office Building

By Harrison Cann, Pennsylvania Legislative Services

The committee held a public hearing on behavioral health, Second Amendment rights, and other gun-related issues.

[Kenneth Certa](#), co-chair, Government Relations Committee, Pennsylvania Psychiatric Society, testified that mass shootings are a small percentage of gun violence and that a small percentage of individuals with serious mental illness commit violence acts against others. He stressed that suicide is the most common form of gun violence related to mental illness and that studies show places with less access to guns have lower rates of suicide.

Certa discussed five recommendations, including: to enact extreme risk protection order legislation; to increase screenings for children and youth of transitional age; to increase mental health and substance use funding; to support the needs of forensic psychiatrists; and to support safeguards to ensure guns are correctly stored and do not get into the unsafe hands.

[David Rogers](#), past president, Pennsylvania Psychological Association, testified that there is never one indicator that correlates to gun violence but the largest indicator for an individual is that they have a history of violence. He stated that there need to be resources to properly identify those with violent behavior, and that it would be beneficial for police officers to have conversations and be trained to identify mental health issues.

Rogers stated that increasing access to mental health providers, including incorporating them within primary care facilities, and expanding school psychiatry and telehealth communications. Concluding, he stressed the importance of forming partnerships and community coalitions between gun sellers and owners, mental health advocates, and others to intervene in situations that could potentially lead to violence.

Chairman Lisa Baker (R-Luzerne) asked if broadening mental health resources in schools would help prevent instances of violent episodes. Certa responded that it absolutely would help. Chairman Baker asked how an extreme risk protection process could be balanced to raise a red flag without taking away due process. Certa responded that there is a question about due process in banning someone's rights to gun ownership.



Chairman Baker asked if there could be a process to prove a person's mental health has improved and get their gun rights restored. Certa responded that it could be possible but that it would require a long and expensive legal process. Chairman Baker asked what role treatment drugs play in individuals committing suicide. Certa responded that he is not sure whether there is data that proves drug treatment had adverse effects in suicidal patients.

Sen. Arthur Haywood (D-Montgomery) asked how many people in Pennsylvania are affected by mental health that could make them more likely to commit suicide by gun. Certa responded that studies show that most people think about suicide so it is difficult to quantify. He stated that 10 percent of the population at any time has a mental illness.

Sen. Haywood asked if an option would be to have a better process for screening and treating people. Rogers responded that it would be prudent to have a better screening and treatment process but that increasing mental health treatment awareness among the public and those working with children is also crucial.

Sen. Haywood asked what cost would be associated with screening and treating patients. Certa responded that screening for depression is included in every health plan. He stated that the best "bang for your buck" would be to increase screenings in schools. Sen. Haywood asked how you can identify isolated individuals that are not children. Certa responded that there would likely have been a time earlier in their life where intervention was needed.

Sen. Haywood asked how resources can be utilized to identify and prevent potential violent individuals. Certa responded that picking up on warning signs, such as during schooling, would be beneficial.

Sen. Steven Santarsiero (D-Bucks) asked how mental illness in the United States relates to other industrialized countries. Certa responded that mental illness is similar in the United States but that the outcomes are different in this country because the access to guns leads to more shootings and suicides.

Sen. Santarsiero asked how guns could be safely stored to prevent suicides. Certa responded that safe storage is very important. Rogers commented that gun owners are very prudent about their gun storage but that some people lack common sense and that may or may not be affected by a safe storage law.

[Richard Edley](#), president and CEO, Rehabilitation and Community Providers Association, testified that although many would like to assume those committing acts of mass violence are mentally ill, mental illness plays a limited role in incidents of mass violence. He stated that perpetrators of mass violence can be categorized by motivation, but that characteristics of individual perpetrators vary across demographic, sociologic, cultural and occupational groups.

Edley reiterated that gun violence is a complex issue and that stigmatizing individuals with mental illness does not solve issues surrounding the problem. Concluding, Edley stressed that mental health resources and interventions are chronically underfunded and need funding to properly address the issues of individuals experiencing mental illness.

[Dr. Jack Rozel](#), medical director, Resolve Crisis Services, University of Pittsburgh Medical Center Western Psychiatric Hospital, stated that the most important thing he has learned in working in the field of psychiatric illness is that it does not play a large role in violence or mass violence. He stated that identifying and disrupting attacks can occur by engaging with people and understanding why violence occurs.

Rozel added that health providers are not inherently anti-Second Amendment but "anti-gunshot wound." He reiterated that studies of mass violence have shown that identifying root causes of violence and providing proper mental health resources can address treating those in need.

[Christine Michaels](#), CEO, National Alliance on Mental Illness, Keystone Pennsylvania, testified that mental illness does not cause violence and that a person with a mental illness is more likely to be a victim than a perpetrator. She stated that stigmatizing comments by the media are not beneficial to those experiencing a mental illness.



Chairman Baker asked what proper assessment training tools would look like. Dr. Rozel responded that attacks are thought about and deliberated over days, months, or even years. He stated that identifying risk factors and using collaboration tools between mental health, law enforcement, and other professionals can address the root causes.

Minority Chairman Lawrence Farnese (D-Philadelphia) asked if Pennsylvania and the United States have disproportionately more mental health illness compared to other countries. Dr. Rozel responded that the rates of mental illness are similar across modernized countries, and that drug and video game usage are also similar to other countries. Edley commented that the availability of guns is the biggest difference between the United States and other countries.

Sen. Wayne Langerholc (R-Cambria) asked if issues of mental health have increased over time. Edley responded that it has not increased over time but the resources given towards screening and treatment have increased. Dr. Rozel commented that he does not know but that society's ability to identify instances of illness has grown.

Edley added that identifying causes of violence not related to mental illness would play a factor. Dr. Rozel noted that scientific developments have led to incorporated those with psychiatric illnesses into society rather than keeping them locked away in a hospital, however a lack of funding for resources for mentally ill individuals still could lead to them being isolated in society. Michaels commented that curing mental illness would not lead to less gun violence.

Al Masland, judge, Cumberland County Court of Common Pleas, discussed different specialty courts that conduct work in Cumberland County. He stated that Together Optimizing Mental Health Solutions (TOMS) Court and Opioid Treatment Court are similar criminal justice programs that provide treatment and supervision. Masland added that mental health courts are part of a continuum of treatment that use practice-based evidence to find new innovations in identifying risks, what [SB 90](#) looks to accomplish, and helping those experiencing mental health issues.

He noted that the courts use service dogs as one innovation to help those adjusting to a court setting. Concluding, he stated that people in Opioid Treatment Court and TOMS Court do experience issues that could involve treatment from the other court but that they are introduced in the court that would best treat their most pressing issue.

Jon Shank, forensic case manager, Holy Spirit Behavioral Health Center, stated that he works with individuals experiencing mental health issues that are directly associated with their criminal charges.

Karen Rhinehart, general supervision, Cumberland County Adult Probation and Parole, testified that, as a probation officer, she works with individuals with serious mental illnesses. She added that creating alternative sanctions for those individuals have proved to be beneficial because it does not change the process of therapy and treatment that they need. Rhinehart noted that service dogs are able to comfort participants going through treatment and experiencing court for the first time.

Sen. John Gordner (R-Columbia) asked how many counties have mental health courts. Masland responded that he does not know but that information can be found online. Sen. Gordner asked what pending applications mean for the court and individuals applying. Rhinehart responded that applications are submitted by an individual's defense attorney and that the process has to go through the district attorney's office and probation officers for approval.

Sen. Gordner asked what the baseline need for approval is for the court. Masland responded that an individual has to have a diagnosis of a serious mental illness. He added that he would not like to have a backlog of applicants but it is being addressed.

Chairman Baker confirmed that there are 20 mental health treatment courts in Pennsylvania. Sen. Mike Regan (R-Cumberland) asked what percentage of people coming to treatment courts have a diagnosed or suspected mental illness. Masland responded that there would likely be many with a suspected mental illness but not many have a diagnosis. He stated that scaling adverse childhood experiences on a one-to-ten scale is used to diagnose individuals.

Sen. Regan asked if it is safe to say that the majority have mental health issues. Masland responded that almost everyone



has anxious or depressed thoughts but not many could qualify for a mental diagnosis. Sen. Regan asked what kind of crime individuals Masland sees. Masland responded that many have loitering and trespassing offenses but there are some DUI offenses. He noted that there are some that have committed violent crimes, but not many.

Sen. Haywood commented that dealing with failure does not have any causation with mental illness and that root causes of depression are not consistent with a lack of ability to deal with failure. Masland stated that he did not want to trivialize the issue of depression but that treating patients with mental illness does come back to helping them deal with failure.

Chairman Farnese noted that children face failure often in school, and often, children in disadvantaged areas face many barriers in life. Masland responded that people are rewarded in treatment court for appearing in court, taking medication, and passing drug tests, and that he recognizes treating people with care has value.

Sen. Camera Bartolotta (R-Washington) asked if Pennsylvania has a lack of resources to treat people and prevent mental health and drug abuse issues. Masland responded that there is a lack of funding to treat and prevent issues. Shank reiterated that there is a lack of funding for proper resources. Michaels commented that there is a backlog of treatment court applications because there is a lack of facilities to house individuals, and that many people have to be incarcerated in a state facility because there is a lack of resources for psychiatric treatment.

[Lt. Col. Scott Price](#), Deputy Commissioner of Administration and Professional Responsibility, Pennsylvania State Police (PSP), discussed the process of police officers dealing with those in crisis. He stated that an officer is able to take an individual to a treatment facility, and upon evaluation, a physician can discharge an individual if they are determined to not be in crisis. He added that if a physician confirms that the individual might be a danger to themselves or others a gun prohibition takes effect, but that the sharing of treatment information is ambiguous following that.

Price noted of occasions in the past where treatment facilities have failed to share information regarding individuals with mental illness diagnoses and the Pennsylvania Instant Check System (PICS) failed to be updated with pertinent information. He stated that different counties, especially rural communities, lack the resources to properly keep updated systems and treat mental illnesses.

He added that there are relief and expungement processes in place that allow an individual's gun prohibition to be removed. Concluding, he stated that the biggest challenge PSP faces is a lack of collaboration between mental health treatment facilities and PICS.

Chairman Baker asked if the seven-day period for mental health diagnosis to be shared should be changed. Price responded that the window does create a time of vulnerability and that is a concern. Chairman Baker asked if there should be an electronic requirement for submissions that would expedite the process of filing in the system. Price responded that there is electronic capability but it is difficult to identify an anomaly in recording with paper filing.

Chairman Baker asked how treatment filings work across county and state lines. Price responded that county is supposed to report facilities and treatments but that it is difficult to determine how treatment commitments are filed across state systems.

Sen. Regan asked if an electronic requirement would be important for lessening the seven-day period for initial filing. Price responded that it could be important. Sen. Bartolotta asked how an inconsistent system is protecting anyone in Pennsylvania if gun shop owners cannot access PICS all the time.

Sen. Bartolotta also asked how an officer can take someone in crisis to a hospital within a two-hour time period if many have long waiting periods. Price responded that the two-hour period for mental health diagnoses can be surpassed if there is a justifiable reason for why the individual was not treated in time. He added that PICS can be down because the National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS) is down, and that there is no delay in bringing the system back up because all other PSP systems would be down in those scenarios as well.



Sen. Santarsiero asked if PICS is more comprehensive than NICS and if Pennsylvania should just use NICS instead. Price responded that PICS is more comprehensive. He added that if NICS is able to close the gaps between its databases and PICS' it could save the state money.

Sen. Santarsiero asked for Price's opinion on [SB 88](#), [SB 138](#), and [SB 483](#). Price responded that PSP has supported the concepts of universal background checks but that the development of such laws could be changed.

Sen. Joe Pittman (R-Indiana) asked if the avenues of petitioning for gun prohibition relief would require legal counsel. Price responded that it would be likely that legal counsel would be needed but not in all cases.

Sen. Regan asked how many firearms retrieved in all the criminal cases and search warrants that Price has dealt with or heard about were purchased legally. Price responded that there could be instances of guns passed from person to person where they are not legally purchased but in instances of domestic issues the guns are usually legally purchased.

Chairman Baker how difficult a safe storage law would be to enforce. Price responded that those laws are enforceable when something bad happens but they would be very difficult to enforce in the absence of another offense or probable cause.

Chairman Baker asked if the timeframe for background checks is sufficient. Price responded that the 15-day approval will vary, stating that many purchases are instant approvals. He added that about 99 percent of approvals are made within one phone call but for the small amount of cases that require research of records, the records do take several days to obtain.

Chairman Baker asked if Price has concerns about internet sale of guns. Price responded that when internet purchases occur, the buyer still has to pick up the gun at a dealer. He added that there could be instances where the person who made the purchase online is not the same person picking up the gun, but that dealers are advocates of avoiding straw purchases.

Chairman Farnese asked if law enforcement keeps data on instances of illegal firearms in regards to drug purchases or mental illness. Price responded that he does know if data related to that exists. He stated that he does not know if instances of illegal possession of a gun relating to drug purchase are kept on the frontend of an investigation.

[Mike Vereb](#), director of government affairs, Office of the Attorney General, testified about the Safe2Say program following Act 44 of 2018 being signed into law. He stated that students were trained about how to use the program and that tips can be received through an app, website, and phone call. He added that nearly 24,000 tips were sent in, and that most of those received regarded issues of bullying, self-harm, and suicide ideation. Vereb noted that the Attorney General's office does not follow up on tips but it is up to the school and school district to handle those situations.

[Brittney Kline](#), director of Safe2Say Program, Office of the Attorney General, stated that the Attorney General's office is in constant contact with schools and are working to streamline to process of monitoring and addressing tips. She stated that schools are dealing with a lot of tips so the priority is to address protocols to make it easier for schools to handle tips.

Chairman Baker asked if there are any recommendations for addressing behavioral health issues in schools. Vereb responded that the number of tips coming in was shocking. He added that any mental health resources would be beneficial and he recognized that schools clearly need help in addressing mental health issues. Kline commented that other agencies have come forward and asked to help. She stated that local law enforcement has also helped addressing juveniles in crisis and that collaboration between agencies is beneficial.

Sen. Haywood stated that minors are not typically the perpetrator of mass shootings and asked how minors are related to them. Vereb responded that he does not have data on that but that the system works to address students going through crisis.

Sen. Haywood asked how a juvenile is determined to be in crisis and what happens following that. Vereb responded that the crisis team ensures the information is shared right away but that schools and law enforcement handle everything after



that. Kline commented that tips and concerns are examined and then schools reach out to the student, parents, or law enforcement about addressing the tip.

[Dr. Zoe Maher](#), co-founder, Coalition of Trauma Centers for Firearm Injury Prevention, testified about her experience dealing with gunshot wounds at Temple Hospital in Philadelphia. She stated that gun violence rates are higher in urban areas but that rates of suicide are still high in rural areas. She noted that rates of death from car accidents have decreased in the country and in Pennsylvania and that is a result of increasing preventative measures. Dr. Maher added that members of trauma centers strongly support taking legislative action to prevent gun violence.

[Dr. Raquel Forsythe](#), executive member, Coalition of Trauma Centers for Firearm Injury Prevention, also discussed her experience working on patients with gunshot wounds. She stated that in many cases the patients need multiple surgeries but the initial surgeries are done just to control bleeding and stabilize the patient. She described situations when she tells family members that their loved one has died.

Sen. Haywood asked if they have seen cases of patients that had a gun but were shot by another person with a gun. Dr. Maher responded that she does not know the specific cases but that in cases where there are more guns there are likely more injuries. Sen. Haywood responded about their experience with dealing with suicides. Dr. Forsythe responded that more than 90 percent of people that attempt suicide with a gun are successful and that those dealing with mental health issues need to be treated in a multi-faceted way.

Dr. Maher commented that about 50 percent of people who commit suicide have a mental health diagnosis so the issue stems beyond mental illness and gun ownership. She added that those with mental illness are more likely to commit suicide but that identifying and treating mental illness is essential.

Sen. Haywood asked about the differences between gun violence victim and car crash victim in the trauma unit. Maher responded that safety measures were put in place to significantly prevent car accidents. Dr. Forsythe commented that similar preventions can be made to ensure gun violence deaths go down.

Dr. Maher detailed several pages she received over a weekend related to gunshot wounds. She stressed concerns with normalized violence in many urban communities and urged the committee to prevent these issues of continuing.

Sen. Pittman asked if injury prevention is considered for other injuries such as stabbings. Dr. Forsythe responded that trauma injuries are much more common and fatal with gunshot wounds than stabbings.

Chairman Farnese asked why there is not a similar mobilization to prevent gun deaths as compared to opioid or car accident deaths. Dr. Maher responded that the opioid epidemic occurred very quickly so it caught everyone's attention but that the United States has a deeper history with guns. Dr. Forsythe commented that there was a lot of funding going toward research to bring down car accident deaths but that research into firearm injuries has not been widely accepted.

[Charles Gallo](#), clinical psychologist, testified about the reactions of grief and the issues surrounding mental health. He stated that with grief there is denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance. He added that evilness has always existed and cannot be prevented by legislation. He noted that there are about 30,000 laws existing addressing gun ownership and that one additional one may not make much of a difference.

Gallo stated that people often want immediate change following tragedies but that legislation cannot be passed purely based on emotions. He asserted that most people assume that mass shooters were mentally ill because no sane person would commit such tragedies, but that it is a "gross misconception." He noted that countries with strict firearm regulations still have high rates of suicide and mass murder.

Gallo stated that the root issue of preventing suicide is addressing the reasons for why someone would want to end their life. Concluding, he said that teaching media literacy and not letting mass media affect people's actions would help address



some of these issues.

[John Lott](#), president, Crime Prevention Research Center, stated that car crash deaths were decreasing before the federal government was involved and that competition between automakers creating safe vehicles contributed to the decrease in deaths. He added that there are many cases in which someone who committed a violent crime was receiving mental health treatment and was not diagnosed as a danger to themselves or others.

Lott asserted that the vast majority of mass shootings have occurred in places where firearms are not allowed because mass shooters want to target places where they can attack the most people without defense. He said that research shows that many countries have higher rates of gun deaths per capita than the United States, claiming that countries with the higher rates of gun ownership have lower rates of mass shootings.

Lott said that removing gun-free zones would reduce mass shootings more effectively than other legislation. Discussing gun ownership in Mexico, he stated that Mexico has a homicide rate that is six times higher than that in the United States but that they have much lower rates of gun ownership.

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Senate Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee

9/24/19, 10:00 a.m., Room 461 Main Capitol

By Matt Hess, Pennsylvania Legislative Services

The committee held a public hearing on SB 798.

[SB 798 Killion, Thomas](#) - (PN 1102) Amends the Dog Law, in short title and definitions, establishing a definition for unprovoked; and in dangerous dogs, repealing and replacing provisions regarding court proceeding, certification of registration and disposition. For any person who has been attacked by one or more dogs, or a person whose domestic animal, dog or cat has been killed or injured by an unprovoked attack, the state dog warden or the local police officer may file a complaint before a magisterial district judge, charging the owner or keeper of the dog with harboring a dangerous dog. The owner or keeper of the dog shall be found guilty of a summary offense if the magisterial district judge finds beyond a reasonable doubt that the dog has inflicted severe injury on a human being unprovoked on public or private property; killed or inflicted severe injury on a domestic animal, dog or cat unprovoked while off the owner's property; has a propensity or history of attacks for killing or inflicting severe injury on a domestic animal while on the owner's property unprovoked; or has a history or propensity of attacking humans, domestic animals, dogs or cats unprovoked. The legislation also increases the registration fee for a dangerous dog certificate from \$500 to \$1,000. Effective in 60 days.

Chairman Vogel explained the purpose of the hearing was to hear from victim advocates, law enforcement, and the Department of Agriculture in an effort to examine potential deficiencies in the current Dog Law.

Minority Chairman Schwank that she has heard horrific stories involving dangerous dogs. «It was shocking to me that we didn't have anything to address this,» she stated. «Hopefully we will move forward on this legislation to make the changes we need.»

Sen. Killion, prime sponsor of the bill, emphasized that he is a dog lover and supported various bills protecting animals. «I love dogs; this is about dogs that do the wrong thing. It seems unconscionable that a dog can severely injure someone unprovoked and the owner not held responsible but that's the case under current state law,» he stated. «State law essentially allows every dog one free bite no matter how severe that first bite is and that's unacceptable...we must protect Pennsylvanians, particularly children, from dogs that have caused serious injury.»

[Sarah Hermans](#), proponent of Senate Bill 798, shared her story of when a dog attacked her son Damien. «My son Damien, was attacked by a dog known to us in the summer of 2016. Damien immediately went to Paoli Hospital after the attack,



where we were told that he should have reconstructive surgery as soon as possible. His lips were dangling, almost in two, and there was a deep gash in between his eyes. I was in shock. My only thought was to make sure Damien's face was fixed. He had to undergo almost three hours of reconstructive surgery under general anesthesia," she stated. "We realized the right thing to do was to try to get the dog deemed dangerous. We were told by several people that it was going to be difficult, with the dog laws written the way they are. But we thought about other children, or anyone else encountering the dog in the future. What about them? Not to mention justice for Damien. We moved forward, despite the odds. As this is a summary offence a police officer was assigned to the role of prosecutor. In our case, he was up against a seasoned defense attorney. The police officer did his best, but because of the need to prove vicious propensity the dog was cleared of all charges."

[Melissa Barnes](#), proponent of Senate Bill 798, shared that her daughter Meredith was attacked by a dog and was forced to go to the hospital. "I recall standing in the ER covered in my child's blood screaming for help and begging for someone to look at her eye. They took us back immediately to assess the situation. Her face was covered in blood, there was a large laceration by her chin, another one under her eye, and her eyelid was split open along the crease," she stated. "The eyelid is extremely thin and I could see her eye through the ripped lid. In addition to the three main lacerations, her face was covered in cuts, scratches and bruises from the dog attack. The doctor controlled the bleeding and stitched both lacerations on her face and the one on her eyelid. We received antibiotics and were sent home with instructions to see an ophthalmologist and plastic surgeon."

Barnes explained that she called the West Goshen police department and filed a police report the day after the attack. "On March 26, 2019 we had the trial. My neighbor brought in several of her friends as character witnesses for the dog. She testified that her dog was sitting calmly at her feet that she was tightly holding onto his harness, and that as Meredith bent down to pet the dog they 'collided.' She said her dog did not bite Meredith, and that her wounds were the result of them colliding heads," Barnes stated. "Despite the evidence we presented during the trial, the dog was cleared of all charges. We proved the dog's owner invited us onto her property to pet the dog. We proved the dog attacked my child unprovoked and without any warning. We also provided evidence of the extensive damage the dog caused to my child. Despite almost losing her eye and having her face mauled during an unprovoked dog attack, the dog was cleared of all charges because we were not able to prove vicious propensity. Those two words changed our world and allowed the system to fail our daughter."

[Molly Carroll Newton](#), proponent of Senate Bill 798, shared how she was attacked by a dog while on a walk with her daughter. "I was transported to Paoli Hospital by ambulance. The ER doctors cleaned my bite wounds. I received 12 stitches in my face to repair the damage. Because of the risk of infection, the other wounds on my body could not be stitched. Since the attack, I have been seeing a plastic surgeon to repair the damage to my face. I will need additional corrective surgery on my facial injuries, but my face will never look the same," she stated. "In my case, the dog owner was found guilty of harboring a dangerous dog. However, the case is currently on appeal, and I will have to relive the entire experience again. In my case, I am lucky. I have had incredible support from Schuylkill Township Police Department, Schuylkill Township Board of Commissioners, and of all of the neighbors where the attack occurred. Unfortunately, this does not always seem to be the case in Pennsylvania dog attack incidents."

Chairman Vogel questioned if there was a specific type of breed that attacked the victims. The panelists said the dogs were mixed breeds.

Chairman Vogel asked how their cases could have been different if Senate Bill 798 was already law. Hermans explained that if "vicious propensity" was not needed to be proven, the owners of the dog would have been found guilty of harboring a dangerous dog. Newton emphasized the need to have "provocation" clearly defined in law as it is under the legislation.

Chairman Schwank questioned how the victims are holding up now after the attacks. Hermans said her son Damien will have permanent scarring on his lips and has nerve damage and there has also been psychological damage to the whole family. Barnes said her daughter Meredith has plastic surgery scheduled but has caused psychological trauma and Meredith is currently in therapy. She added that her children have to walk past the dog every day on their way to school. Newton said she and her daughter are suffering from PTSD and she will need corrective surgery to reduce scarring.



Chairman Schwank emphasized that she loves dogs but there needs to be a change in the law. “It almost appears that the animal has more standing in the court than the human who suffered severe damage,” she stated.

Sen. Mastriano thanked the panel for their testimony and said he will sign on as a cosponsor to the bill. “I’m appalled that a victim has to prove innocence. It doesn’t have to be like this, it’s madness,” he stated. “It’s diminishing to our rights as human beings and as a citizen and this must change.”

Sen. Street echoed the sentiment of Sen. Mastriano and shared that his sister was attacked by a dog as a child and had scars well into adulthood. “As a society our first obligation has to be to protect people and our children and this is a matter we should take action on,” he stated.

Brian McCarthy, corporal, Schuylkill Township Police Department, shared the details of the incident involving Newton and explained that the dog bit another individual the same day. He noted that the owner of the dog was a defense attorney and hired a prominent defense attorney to represent them in the case and indicated that Newton received a positive result because the judge did not allow character witnesses to testify. “Imagine if we took the behavior of the dogs and applied it to people. Let’s say the defendant ran off his property and attacked Molly in the street with a screwdriver causing the same injuries to her face and then attacked a neighbor on the way back to the property?,” he stated.

Gerald Simpson, chief, Southern Chester County Regional Police Department, spoke in support of the legislation and said dog bites are up 36 percent in Chester County over the last ten years. “We are looking for some commonsense measures and Senate Bill 796 does that,” he stated. “Vicious propensity should be removed, I think it’s an unreasonable bar for law enforcement to prove ‘provocation’ and ‘unprovoked attacks’ needs to be clearly defined. These commonsense steps fixes the law and gets us on the right path.”

Chairman Vogel asked how often dog attacks happen in their communities. Simpson said in 36 years in law enforcement he never personally investigated a dog attack but clarified that his statistics are from the Chester County Department of Health. McCarthy said his department had a dozen or so incidents in the last year but opined that it will be a bigger issue as the population in his community grows.

Fred Strathmeyer, deputy secretary, Department of Agriculture, thanked the panelists for sharing their experiences but noted that he just started in his role a couple months ago and would let the director of the Bureau of Dog Law Enforcement testify on behalf of the department.

Kristen Donmoyer, director, Bureau of Dog Law Enforcement, Department of Agriculture, explained that the Dangerous Dog section of the Dog Law is the most complex section but it is critical to public safety. “Pennsylvania dog wardens work daily to ensure public safety, from investigating the nearly 1,400 dog bites reported in 2018, to charging the owners of dangerous dogs, and tracking and monitoring dangerous dogs’ whereabouts for life,” she stated. “This is one section of the Dog Law where individuals who may not own dogs can be significantly impacted. Dog attacks can happen anywhere, at any time, to even the most cautious of individuals Dog attacks affect everyone involved - the victim, the dog owner, and the community.”

Donmoyer spoke in support of the legislation and explained that it makes critical changes that are necessary for improving public safety. “The Dangerous Dog section currently uses the term ‘without provocation’ as one of the requirements to deem a dog dangerous. This language is not currently defined within the dog law, causing confusion about the statutory intent. There have been numerous instances in which a dog that attacked a person or child has not been deemed dangerous because the law does not clearly define ‘without provocation.’ This bill would replace ‘without provocation’ with the defined term ‘unprovoked’ which is used throughout each chargeable section within the Dangerous Dog Law providing a clearer designation,” Donmoyer stated. “Second, the bill would more clearly label citable provisions to simplify the filing and prosecution of a dangerous dog case. The Bureau regularly deals with situations in which offices outside of dog law file what they believe are a dangerous dog charge, but accidentally file the wrong charge because the currently drafted sections are confusing. Thus, a dog intended to be deemed dangerous does not end up on the registry due to human error. The improved clarity proposed in the legislation would close an unintentional loophole to ensure dangerous dogs are not precluded from



the registry because of a filing error.”

Donmoyer noted that legislation would increase the dangerous dog registration fee from \$500 to \$1,000 and would have a positive fiscal impact to the Department with increased revenue of approximately \$100,000 annually. “Currently, there are 645 dangerous dogs on the Dangerous Dog Registry that are overseen by the Bureau. This increased revenue to the Bureau would help cover the costs of investigating dog bites, maintaining the statewide Dangerous Dog Registry, and conducting bi-annual dangerous dog inspections,” she stated.

Chairman Vogel asked how a dog gets on the dangerous dogs list. Donmoyer explained that a judge must deem the dog dangerous and the judge then sends the bureau a notification and the bureau adds the dog to the registry.

Chairman Vogel questioned if there is someone in the bureau that maintains the dangerous dog registry. Donmoyer said there is a dangerous dog coordinator within the bureau.

Chairman Vogel asked if the bureau has the resources to come up with the demand, given that many municipalities are eliminating their animal control units. Donmoyer said the bureau is doing their best but the office is significantly short staffed and in need of more resources.

Chairman Vogel asked if the department supports the legislation. Donmoyer said the department supports the bill and assisted in drafting some of the language.

Written testimony was also offered by the [Office of Victim Advocate](#).

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House Veterans Affairs and Emergency Preparedness Committee

09/24/19, 10:00 a.m., Room 205, Ryan Office Building

By Robert Cochran, Pennsylvania Legislative Services

The committee met to consider legislation.

[HB 432 Barrar, Stephen](#) - (PN 419) Amends the Workers' Compensation Act further providing for compensation for post-traumatic stress injury. The bill adds that «occupational disease» includes post-traumatic stress injury, which is suffered by a police officer, firefighter or emergency medical services provider and caused by exposure to a traumatic event arising in the course of the provider's employment or, after four years or more of service, is caused by and related to the cumulative effect of psychological stress in the course of the provider's employment for the benefit and safety of the public. Effective in 60 days. - The bill was unanimously **reported as amended**.

[A02901](#) by Barrar, requires post-traumatic stress injuries (PTSI) to be a compensable under workers compensation for first responders, including 911 center dispatches and corrections officers. The amendment was unanimously **adopted**.

Chairman Stephen Barrar (R-Delaware) said the bill is similar to laws in over 12 states. He stated that the committee conducted several hearings on this issue and worked with stakeholders in drafting the bill. He said that the issue of PTSI for emergency first responders has reached the “crisis stage” and that more fire, police and emergency medical service (EMS) responders have been dying by suicide than in the line of duty. He said that those first responders need assistance is workers' compensation to address the crisis.

Rep. Jennifer O'Mara (D-Delaware) spoke of her father's firefighting experience in Philadelphia and suicide, which she attributed to PTSI. She said that Philadelphia lost a firefighter to suicide recently, and commended the committee for the legislation.



Minority Chairman Chris Sainato (D-Lawrence) said the committee has worked on this legislation “for a while” and encouraged members to support the bill.

Rep. Joseph Webster (D-Montgomery) said he supported the bill, but that the committee needs to eventually take a “holistic” approach to the issue.

[HB 1448 Sturla, Mike](#) - (PN 1796) Amends Title 35 (Health and Safety), in volunteer fire company, ambulance service and rescue squad assistance, providing for a referendum to expand loan assistance. The referendum shall read: Do you favor expanding the use of the indebtedness authorized under 35 Pa.C.S. 7367 (relating to authority to borrow) and 7378.1 (relating to referendum for additional indebtedness) for the volunteer loan assistance under 35 Pa.C.S. Ch. 73 Subch. E (relating to volunteer fire company, ambulance service and rescue squad assistance) to include loans to fire companies that provide services through paid personnel for the purpose of establishing and modernizing facilities to house firefighting apparatus equipment, ambulances and rescue vehicles, protective and communications equipment and any other accessory equipment necessary for the proper performance of such organizations' duties. The referendum shall not be constructed as authorizing any additional borrowing for loan assistance to fire companies. Effective in 60 days. - The bill was unanimously **reported as committed**.

Rep. Carol Hill-Evans (D-York) said this bill was a recommendation from the report and provides for modifying emergency services facilities. She said that if the referendum is passed by voters, Title 35 (Health and Safety) would need to be amended, changing the definition of Volunteer Loan Assistance Program (VLAP) to Emergency Responders Loan Assistance Program (ERLAP). She said a ballot referendum was selected to be transparent for voters and that it would allow “career departments” to be eligible for loans. She added that no monetary increase would occur because of this change. Rep. Hill-Evans said the change from volunteer to career departments occurred because of low supply of volunteers and that urban areas need professional firefighters to address those challenges.

[HB 1459 Schlossberg, Mike](#) - (PN 1826) Amends Titles 35 (Health and Safety) and 75 (Vehicles), in Title 35, adding a chapter providing for emergency responder mental wellness and stress management; establishing the Statewide Critical Incident Stress Management Program; providing for duties of the Secretary of Health and the Department of Health; in emergency medical services system, further providing for support of emergency medical services; in operation of vehicles general provisions, further providing for EMS costs; and, in driving after imbibing alcohol or utilizing drugs, further providing for Accelerated Rehabilitative Disposition. Effective in 60 days. - The bill was unanimously **reported as amended**.

[A02667](#) by Sainato, adds corrections officers to the bill and provides for a technical change to the definition of PTSI. The amendment was unanimously **adopted**.

[A02872](#) by Barrar, is an omnibus amendment, making several technical changes and includes more mental health entities and programs in training as resources. The amendment was unanimously **adopted**.

Rep. Mike Schlossberg (D-Lehigh) said the bill establishes a mental wellness and stress management protocol by the Department of Human Services (DHS), provides for education and training for first responders regarding post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), PTSI, or any other traumatic event, and creates a peer-to-peer support program for trained peer support specialists to assist with first responders coping with a traumatic event or other mental health issue. He added that the bill creates a confidential toll-line for first responders coping with PTSD, addiction or mental health issue. He commended the committee and Rep. Frank Farry (R-Bucks) for working on the legislation.

Chairman Sainato said that the changes were agreed to by Rep. Farry, Rep. Schlossberg and Chairman Barrar.

[HB 1816 Culver, Lynda](#) - (PN 2473) Amends Title 35 (Health and Safety) increasing loan limits of the Volunteer Loan Assistance Program (VLAP) and establishing annual inflation adjustments of loan limits based on the Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers in the Northeast Region. Effective in 60 days. - The bill was unanimously **reported as committed**.



Rep. Lynda Culver (R-Northumberland) said that no increase for VLAP programs has occurred since 2013. She said that first responders are handling “more complex” issues and should focus on training and the public instead of fundraising. She said the funding is inflated by 10 percent and includes an automatic adjustment based of the consumer price index (CPI). She said no issues have been raised regarding the revolving loan fund.

[HB 1869 Owlett, Clint](#) - - The bill was unanimously **reported as committed**.

Rep. Clint Owlett (R-Tioga) said the bill staffing waiver would only apply to basic life support services and that the Department of Health will maintain discretion granting waivers based on local EMS system needs and patient care. He said that rural communities, EMS agencies are struggling to maintain staffing levels for 24 hours, creating extremely long waits for services. He said the proposal was based on the SR 6 report.

Rep. Todd Polinchock (R-Bucks) stated that the bills just passed in committee take “a great step” in making Pennsylvania and first responders safer and address the trouble recruiting and maintaining first responders. He commended both chairman for their leadership.

Chairman Barrar said the committee’s effort is based on SR 6 and that the committee hopes to work on more in October.

Chairman Sainato commended that the committee’s efforts this session, suggesting the committee has provided more legislation this session than other committees. He also noted that Democratic Research Analyst Harry Bucher would be retiring from the committee and acknowledged the institutional knowledge he brought to the committee.

Rep. Mark Gillen (R-Berks) recognized the attendance of firefighters who assisted in drafting some of the legislation considered today. Chairman Barrar commended the firefighters for assisting the committee.

Chairman Barrar said the committee has held numerous meetings with stakeholders in order for them to pass in the House and the Senate. He recognized the challenges the bills face, but said he is hoping that the bills leaving committee do not be changed too much. He added that leadership has control whether the bills are considered, but he anticipates a majority of the bills to be voted on in late October. He told members that a press conference would occur near then, and encouraged members to support the bills there.

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Senate Health and Human Services Committee

9/24/19, 11:00 a.m., 8 E-B East Wing

By Sheri Melnick, Pennsylvania Legislative Services

The committee held a hearing on the closures of the Polk and White Haven State Centers.

[Dr. James Latronica](#), chief resident, Clarion Hospital Family Medicine, asserted that the reason for the hearing is to “decide whether it is appropriate to evict 200 people from their home.” He explained that he saw three potential rationales for the closure of Polk: the “moral imperative” to deinstitutionalize people, medical reasons to increase the quality of care, and financial reasons. He asserted that the mass deinstitutionalizations in the 1970s and 1980s from the state psychiatric institutions led to homelessness. Dr. Latronica remarked that there is no evidence to support the claim that the quality of care would be better in the community. He commented that the financial reasons for closure are “the most probable” reasons. Dr. Latronica opined that it would be helpful to view data after the closure of the Hamburg State Center to see whether the quality of care for former residents and integration into the community improved after the center was closed.

[Celia Feinstein](#), executive director, Institute on Disabilities, Temple University, explained that after the court-ordered closure of the Pennhurst State School and Hospital, a subsequent research study showed that people were better off in the community than they had been at Pennhurst. She noted that the study looked at the impact of deinstitutionalization on families by



surveying every family before and six months after leaving Pennhurst. Feinstein asserted that prior to the move, 55 percent strongly disagreed with the closure, but after the move, 66 percent strongly agreed with the decision. She commented that people with the most significant disabilities are those who are most likely to succeed in the community. She said, “For every person living in an institution, there is a similarly situated person living successfully in the community and a similarly situated person living at home with their family.”

Feinstein cited data showing that the population of state institutions has decreased by 12.7 percent nationally and by 9.4 percent in Pennsylvania. She noted that 14 states have closed all of their institutions and remarked that the cost to house patients is \$255,000 nationally and \$378,000 in Pennsylvania. Feinstein opined that Polk and White Haven could be downsized and used for respite care.

[Sherri Landis](#), executive director, The Arc of Pennsylvania, applauded Gov. Tom Wolf’s decision to close the state centers at Polk and White Haven and to transition members to the communities. She asserted that state centers remain a “segregated model of service” and that founders of The Arc never thought that Pennsylvania would still have people in state centers. She noted that job and economic loss are “real concerns” and asserted that jobs are available for staff in the community. She remarked, “One person’s job is not enough reason to violate another person’s civil rights.”

[Carl Solano](#), attorney, remarked that he served as a guardian for his sister Diane when she was a resident at White Haven until her death in 2015. He noted that he was also her attorney in the *Benjamin* litigation, which protected her right to continue to receive comprehensive care at an intermediate care facility (ICF). He asserted that the Department of Human Services (DHS) wants to provide less, not comprehensive, care to people in community facilities because it is cheaper. Solano noted that the *Benjamin* case focused on people with complex needs. Solano explained that Diane had a mental age of less than a one-year-old, could not care for herself, and had early stages of Alzheimer’s disease. He asserted that she needed 24-hour supervision in a secure location, which could not have been provided in a group home.

Solano explained that in response to the *Benjamin* case, DHS reevaluated residents of ICFs and kept most of them in the ICFs because they “needed to be there.” He cited federal Medicaid law, which established that people have a right to institutional care if they qualify to be in an ICF. He asserted that the *Olmstead* decision provided for the rights of residents to move to a community setting and that they have a right to institutional care if they need it. He said, “State centers are not like Pennhurst.” He commented that he has not seen any guarantees that beds at Ebensburg and Selinsgrove State Centers would be available for residents after the proposed closures of White Haven and Polk. Solano asked the committee to enact a moratorium on the closure to allow time for a study to ensure that residents will be able to get the care that they need.

[Gregory Smith](#), consultant on psychiatric and behavioral health care services, noted that he was the last CEO of Harrisburg State Hospital, and that he is currently president of the White Haven Board of Trustees. He remarked that California studies have provided evidence about California residents who left state centers between 1993 and 2000 had mortality rates “significantly higher” than those who did not move. He remarked that after the closure of Hamburg State Center in 2017, 15 of the 80 former residents died. Smith advocated for legislative approval before any department can close a facility that provides a service to a vulnerable population.

Chairman Brooks asked Feinstein if there are differences between state centers in 1978 and present-day state centers like Polk and White Haven. Feinstein noted the differences and opined that people with disabilities are living successfully in communities and that DHS provides monitoring for those community homes. She commented that state centers are still segregated settings. Smith noted that group homes with low pay and retention rates are “significant barriers” to quality of care. He explained that Blossom Philadelphia, a group home provider, left the residents “in crisis.”

Rep. James asked if the decision to close the centers was made by DHS and the governor. He noted that he was guaranteed six months ago that this was not going to happen. He asked about the health outcomes for residents after closure. Dr. Latronica opined that the answer is “very complicated” and noted that 24-hour care with the same staff enables the treatment to be more accurate. He asserted that overall, following closure of the centers, people will get sicker and that there will be more emergency department (ED) visits and more skilled nursing placements. He commented that residents and family



members were not polled regarding the closure of Polk and White Haven.

Sen. Hutchinson asked Landis if her organization would vote to close all state centers. He remarked that the closures are taking away the civil rights of individuals and families who have made a decision that residing in a state center is the best option for their loved ones. Landis stated that it has always been the mission of The Arc that families and individuals are included in the community.

Sen. Hutchinson noted that those who desire to live in the centers have that right. He asked why someone would take away their rights by saying that the centers should be closed. Landis responded that the residents have other options regarding where to live rather than at a state center.

Sen. Street noted that there is an assertion that “everybody can be mainstreamed everywhere” and noted that “everywhere” will not have the same resources for mainstreaming. He asked if there are any thoughts that mainstreaming may be more difficult in some areas rather than others. Solano noted that in the *Benjamin* litigation, the community facilities could sometimes not take the residents because the services and supports were beyond the capacity of the community facilities to handle. He noted that DHS had a “terrible time” trying to place the individuals.

Chairman Brooks asked where residents would be placed if they could not be placed in a local community setting due to a lack of resources. Feinstein noted that the case study of Hamburg was a «way to do this right» and noted that there are eight health care quality units. She opined that placement needs to be monitored carefully and can be done well. Landis encouraged people to visit those who had lived at Hamburg and are now living in the community.

Chairman Brooks noted that the concern is that the decision for closure of the state centers is being made without the families’ or residents’ input.

Rep. Mullery indicated that it was «comical» that Landis remarked about visiting former Hamburg residents when the governor did not visit White Haven. He asked Dr. Latronica to explain transfer trauma. Dr. Latronica noted that transfer trauma is «real» for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Rep. Toohil asked if some of the private facilities can be isolating. Landis responded that private homes are required to have a 25 percent community participation rate.

Rep. Toohil asked if Landis would admit that sometimes staff in community settings is undertrained. Landis asserted that she cannot admit that and noted that providers are going to do «an extremely good job» to make sure that the staff is trained.

Rep. Toohil asked what type of training community providers receive. She noted that private facilities run by someone making money privately are not always «well run.» She asserted that, in her experience, there is undertrained staff in private facilities as opposed to a professionals working at a state center.

Rep. Toohil asked what Landis’s description would be of the turnover rate in community facilities. Landis noted that community facilities have been asking for rate increases from the General Assembly. She complained that the industry is highly regulated and that it is unfair to paint direct support professionals with a «broad stroke» by saying they are not efficient.

Rep. Toohil asked if Landis could admit that there are deficits in the community setting. Landis asserted that both community settings and state centers have deficits and encouraged Rep. Toohil to request that data.

Rep. Toohil expressed her concern that people would be pushed into the community, where there are major deficits. She asserted that there are many members who are not being served appropriately in the community and noted that closing the centers takes away choice and removes residents’ stability. Rep. Toohil noted that there are incidents of deficiencies of community care and that she has been unable to obtain the data.



Chairman Brooks noted that the testimony from the panel has been important to the conversation and opined that the data of the mortality rate is «very disconcerting.»

[John Hirschauer](#), journalist, *National Review*, explained that he interviewed officials at DHS who asserted that closure would be the correct decision, even if residents opposed it. Though DHS officials told Hirschauer that residents could choose to live in another state center after the closure of White Haven and Polk, he emphasized that [Teresa Miller](#), secretary, DHS, admitted that the remaining centers could close.

Hirschauer noted that in a 2011 study, 97.2 percent of the families surveyed wanted the residents to stay, and 271 of the 306 residents capable of responding wanted to stay. He opined that Polk and White Haven are not like Pennhurst.

[Susan Jennings](#), mother of a White Haven resident, explained that her son was served in the community and noted that she chose White Haven because of the abuses he suffered when he was there. She said she is here to fight for her son to continue to be a resident of White Haven.

She noted that ICFs are strictly regulated, while group homes are less regulated and are not required to provide active treatment. She said, “Staff in the ICFs is highly compensated with a stable workforce.” She noted that direct service personnel in group homes do not have support and asserted there is a 40 percent staff turnover rate. Jennings remarked that DHS should open the doors to the centers for voluntary admissions and asked the legislators to convene a joint commission to investigate the closure decision before any further closure action is taken.

[Hugo Dwyer](#), executive director, A Voice of Reason, noted that his brother lives at an ICF in Connecticut and opined that his brother would not be alive today if he did not receive the care he currently has. He commented that there has been misrepresentation about the *Olmstead* decision and asserted that it did not include mandates to close ICFs. He noted that the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is not read to compel states to close down institutions and that *Olmstead* indicated that institutional settings must remain available. Dwyer remarked that group homes are not required to provide active treatment and that ICFs provide closer personal contact, higher staff ratios, and on-site access to doctors and nurses. He opined that community can be «a great thing for some people» and asserted that diverse populations have different needs. Dwyer noted that the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) recognizes the differences between ICFs and group homes, and has addressed the criteria for the operation of ICFs in a manual. He referenced a national study which provided evidence that group homes across the U.S. underreported incidents that occurred at the group homes. Dwyer expressed his interest in having the admission to ICFs reopened.

Rep. James referenced the *Olmstead* decision and noted that it does not condone closing an institution if a resident finds the institution the most desirable place to live. Dwyer opined that if the state does not provide state centers for its residents, they are out of compliance with *Olmstead*.

Jennings commented that the cost of group homes is more economical than state centers. She asserted that a group home provider was paid \$369,000 per year, which did not include room, board, doctors and dentists. Jennings noted that state centers have fixed costs and that if they were opened with voluntary admissions, the cost per person would go down.

[William Bailey and Maria Ferrey](#), Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 668, noted that since the closure announcement on August 14, 2019, the “unethical decision has caused unwarranted stress on individuals.” They opined that the “simple solution” would be to open the doors to the state centers, which would help 13,000 people on the waiting list.

[Darrin Spann](#), assistant to the executive director, American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) Council 13, called to stop the closures of White Haven and Polk and noted that the impact to the employees is “second to the pain of the residents.” He asserted that though most employees have a union to support them, the residents do not have that support. Spann remarked that he received a letter indicating that Sec. Miller would have conversations with the employees impacted but commented that no employees have received any further communication from her.



[Bill Hill](#), maintenance repairman at White Haven Center and president of AFSCME Local 2334, opined that “people are going to die” if the centers are closed. He asserted that employees love the people they take care of and noted that the caregivers are well-trained.

[Tammy Luce](#), residential services aide at Polk Center and president of AFSCME Local 1050, commented that she is testifying on behalf of the individuals who receive care at the centers. She noted that the state centers are “crucial parts of the communities” and that “the decision was made for the residents and employees without any of them being consulted.” She explained that a resident at Polk Center had been a resident of 52 group homes prior to her stay at Polk.

Chairman Brooks noted that legal decisions speak about choice for residents and asked if panelists are aware of when or whether families were asked by DHS if they would prefer a different option as opposed to Polk or White Haven. Hill responded that the families were not consulted.

Chairman Brooks noted that it is the choice of the residents and their families whether to stay at the facility. She thanked the staff members for treating the residents as part of their families.

Sen. Street thanked AFSCME and SEIU for their testimony.

[Randy Seitz](#), president and CEO, Penn-Northwest Development Corporation, opined that Landis, Sec. Miller, or Gov. Wolf have never been to Polk or they would know that Polk is not isolated.

He noted that 800 people work at the Polk Center. He asserted that there are 910 additional jobs available because the Polk Center is in operation. He remarked on the negative economic impact if Polk closes.

Chairman Brooks noted that the residents of Polk would be forced into other communities, which is a comprehensive view of how the closure would impact the Polk community.

Sec. Miller remarked that people with intellectual disabilities should be treated with compassion and respect and said, “We know that the state centers deliver that care.” She remarked that the Wolf administration believes that people deserve to live more freely in their community and homes. Sec. Miller commented that because of changes since 1960, Congress enacted the Medicaid Home and Community-Based Services Waiver program in 1981, “accelerating the trend of deinstitutionalization.” She remarked that community care is similar to that provided at Polk and White Haven and noted that the waiting lists are for people waiting for community care facilities. She asserted that 13,000 people have decided to wait for community services even though there are beds available at the state centers.

Sec. Miller commented that admissions to state centers happen infrequently because of the greater number of options in the community. She noted that the cost per resident at a state center is between \$400,000 and \$450,000 per year because of declining census and stated that there is no waitlist for private intermediate care facilities.

Sec. Miller asserted that DHS does not control center admissions, which are governed by interrelated statute and case law. She noted that the centers may be the only home people have ever known and commented that she understands the “gravity” of the decision. She expressed her confidence that the closure to the centers will be successful, as it was at Hamburg, and opined that DHS needs to consider the sustainability of the decisions. Sec. Miller asked members of the General Assembly to work together as partners.

Chairman Brooks asked Sec. Miller about those who need the care in a state facility. [Kristin Ahrens](#), deputy secretary, Office of Developmental Programs, DHS, remarked that DHS offers care that can be provided in one of the remaining open centers and noted both those centers are at roughly half the capacity. She also stated that there is a private intermediate care facility option with a current population of 2,000 people. Ahrens noted that residential programs serve about 14,000 people across Pennsylvania, with about 5,000 considered as group homes. She remarked that people in community homes have ventilators and opined that those types of people are not served at the state centers.



Chairman Brooks asked Ahrens where she lives. Ahrens replied that she lives in Philadelphia. Chairman Brooks indicated frustration with the comment that those who choose to stay in a state center have two options. She noted that if Polk closes, the two remaining state centers, Ebensburg or Selinsgrove, are at least 2.5 hours away from Polk. Chairman Brooks commented that for those who live in rural Pennsylvania, the disconnect and failure to understand the distance is “frustrating.”

Chairman Brooks asked Sec. Miller how DHS came to their conclusion before the Governor’s Task Force on Housing and Supports for Vulnerable Populations issues its analysis on November 1. Sec. Miller noted that the task force is not related to the closure of state centers. She explained that DHS is constantly evaluating their programs, sustainability, and quality of services. Chairman Brooks asserted that the response by Sec. Miller almost indicates that the population is not “vulnerable.”

Sen. Yudichak asked if DHS discussed the decision to close Polk and White Haven with the legislative committees who have oversight over the programs. Sec. Miller explained that DHS is always answering questions about affordability of care. Sec. Miller noted that the closure process was established to honor the agreements of employee unions and to provide transitions for staff. She asserted that DHS deviated from the process when Hamburg was closed and announced the possibility of the closure prior to closure, which resulted in a rapid departure of staff.

Sen. Yudichak noted that the closure announcement has put stress on the families. He commented that the decision was a unilateral decision by DHS and said it is “disingenuous” to suggest that it is budgetary. He asked if residents at White Haven are residents of the community. Sec. Miller responded that state centers, by design, are segregated settings, which restrict access to the community. She noted that the state centers are still remnants of the idea to control the choice of residents. Sen. Yudichak noted that there is a home for these facilities and that the homes that these individuals have chosen are White Haven and Polk.

Chairman Brooks encouraged DHS to visit Polk and White Haven in January and February to see how travel from those locations could be difficult. Ahrens noted that she grew up in rural Wisconsin and said that in Venango County there are 15 licensed community living homes. She explained that she can share the data and opined that the community system is “dynamic,” with multiple homes opening and closing at any given time.

Sen. Baker noted that the lack of community legislative consultation has been “very troubling.” She asked who was involved in making the decision and the recommendation for closure. Ahrens noted that one of the directors for a state-operated facility was involved in making the decision.

Sen. Baker asked if the director disclosed that information in advance to the Office of General Counsel. Ahrens responded that he disclosed that to her.

Sen. Baker commented that those impacted by the *Benjamin* decision should have a choice. Ahrens noted that *Benjamin* will still be honored as residents impacted by the closures can opt to live at state centers at Ebensburg or Selinsgrove.

Sen. Baker recognized that the community system is where some people want to have their family members placed. She emphasized the importance of ensuring that members have proper care and asked if DHS has plans to eliminate private ICFs. Ahrens remarked that there is not a plan to eliminate private ICFs and noted that DHS will continue the family meetings to understand the process over the next 36 months.

Sen. Baker expressed concern that DHS will be able to guarantee that individuals will be able to have the continued care they need. Sec. Miller explained that the factors reviewed to see which centers should be closed included census, opportunity to serve members in the community, and the state of facilities.

Sen. Baker noted that having an individual with interest in one particular site involved in the closure decision makes people question how the process occurred.



Rep. James delivered 4,900 signatures on a petition with names of those who disagree with the closure decisions. Rep. James noted that 100 percent of residents at Polk wanted to stay there when asked if they wanted to leave. He asked Sec. Miller what makes her think she could do an investigation to satisfy the three-year transition. Sec. Miller explained that DHS is not limiting the time to 36 months.

Rep. Mullery noted that the closure process could not be «less transparent.» He commented on the governor's executive order, 2019-05, *Protection of Vulnerable Populations*. Sec. Miller responded that this applied to the more generalized population of Pennsylvania. Rep. Mullery asked if there is a written analysis of the four remaining state centers analyzing the factors for closure that could be made available to the chair and members of the committee and those who represent the impacted areas. Sec. Miller responded that she could see if such a document exists.

Rep. Mullery asked if anyone was tasked with creating that document and how many meetings were held to discuss closure. Sec. Miller noted that there were two meetings. Rep. Mullery asked if there are minutes from those meetings and what conversations revolved around the closures. Sec. Miller said there was not a long discussion of the issue.

Rep. Mullery asked whether the executive order was consulted when deciding on the closure. Sec. Miller responded that DHS looks “at our programs to see how we can improve them” and noted that the closure decision was made outside of the executive order.

Rep. Mullery noted that the closure was not a topic of budget discussion in February and remarked that a written memorandum needs to be provided on November 1 at the behest of the governor in his executive order.

Sec. Miller noted that the decision for closure was something “we felt it was time to do” and that four state centers are not sustainable. She commented that if the Council on Reform as established by the governor's executive order makes more recommendations, “we will take that into account.”

Rep. Mullery opined that he did not have much faith in the council and asked Sec. Miller if she anticipates that the report due on November 1, 2019, will be made public. Sec. Miller said the council was tasked with reviewing recommendations from prior reports and opined that the report would be made public.

Rep. Mullery asked what happens if the closure is not done at the end of the governor's term. Sec. Miller noted that DHS can make progress in three years.

Sen. Hutchinson noted that he is more dismayed about how the decision was made to close the state centers. He asked who knew and provided input into the closure decisions. Sec. Miller explained that she worked with Ahrens and a former deputy and did not start with many people in the decision-making process. She noted that DHS staff worried about the quality of care provided if word got out.

Sen. Hutchison asked if there would be upheaval with three years of time related to the closure. Sec. Miller noted that Hamburg was a very successful closure and former residents talk about how happy they are.

Sec. Hutchinson asked about how many residents will pass away by the three year closure time. Sec. Miller noted that Hamburg served older people and averaged five deaths per year prior to the closure announcements. She noted that of the 80 residents, six passed away and 11 have died in the 32 months since closure.

Chairman Brooks asked Sec. Miller if it is an accurate portrayal to talk about the declining census when admissions have been closed down. Sec. Miller noted that the number of admissions has declined but that DHS does not control admissions.

Chairman Brooks remarked that while factors may seem logical on paper, “real life matters.” She noted that the “human element” has been missed in this decision. She thanked testifiers for their attendance and stated that legislators will help make sure that the people the committee is trying to help have input.



Additional written testimony was submitted by:

- [AFSCME](#);
- [Sen. Baker and Sen. Yudichak](#); and
- [Irene McCabe](#), president, Polk Center Parents, Friends, and Family.

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House Human Services Committee

9/24/19, 12:00 p.m., Room B31 Main Capitol

By Mike Howells, Pennsylvania Legislative Services

The committee met to consider legislation.

[HR 448 Murt, Thomas](#) - (PN 2406) Resolution recognizing the month of September 2019 as “Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders Awareness Month” in Pennsylvania. - The resolution was unanimously **reported as committed**.

[HR 453 Murt, Thomas](#) - (PN 2388) Resolution recognizing September 5, 2019, as “National Recovery Advocacy Day” in Pennsylvania. - The resolution was unanimously **reported as committed**.

[HR 492 Ullman, Wendy \(F\)](#) - (PN 2474) Resolution designating September 2019 as Benzodiazepine Addiction Recovery Month. - The resolution was unanimously **reported as committed**.

[HR 496 Kinsey, Stephen](#) - (PN 2478) Resolution designating September 8 through 14, 2019, as Direct Support Professionals Week. - The resolution was unanimously **reported as committed**.

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House Health Committee

09/24/19, 12:03 p.m., Room 205, Ryan Office Building

By Robert Cochran, Pennsylvania Legislative Services

The committee met to consider legislation.

[HR 372 Causer, Martin](#) - (PN 1990) Resolution recognizing the month of September 2019 as “Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month” in Pennsylvania. - The bill was unanimously **reported as committed**.

[HR 499 Kinsey, Stephen](#) - (PN 2493) Resolution recognizing the week of October 13 through 19, 2019, as Obsessive Compulsive Disorder Awareness Week. - The bill was unanimously **reported as committed**.

[HR 504 Sainato, Chris](#) - (PN 2514) Resolution recognizing September 30, 2019, as NICU Awareness Day. - The bill was unanimously **reported as committed**.

[HR 506 Quinn, Chris](#) - (PN 2516) Resolution designating the month of September 2019 as Sepsis Awareness Month. - The bill was unanimously **reported as committed**.

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Senate Rules Committee

09/24/19, 3:55 p.m., Rules Committee Conference Room

By Robert Cochran, Pennsylvania Legislative Services

The committee met to consider legislation and consider certain executive nominations.

The [executive nominations](#) were unanimously reported.

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Senate Finance Committee

9/25/19, 9:45 a.m., Room 8E-A, East Wing

By Harrison Cann, Pennsylvania Legislative Services

The committee held a public hearing on SB 74.

[SB 74 Martin, Scott](#) - (PN 339) Amends the Tax Reform Code adding a new article establishing a tax credit to be granted to a business firm that meets the requirements of the legislation for the purpose of funding pediatric cancer research in Pennsylvania. Requires contributions received by a pediatric cancer research center from a business firm to be used exclusively for pediatric cancer research. Provides for availability of tax credits and for the duties of the Department of Revenue. Further provides the total aggregate amount of all tax credits approved shall not exceed \$10 million in a fiscal year. Also provides a tax credit may not be approved in excess of \$2.5 million in a fiscal year for contributions to any one pediatric cancer research center. This new article shall apply to taxable years beginning after December 31, 2019. Effective in 60 days.

Sen. Scott Martin (R-Lancaster) explained that his bill would allow companies to apply for a tax credit from the Department of Revenue for donating to a Pennsylvania pediatric cancer research hospital. He noted that pediatric cancer is still the leading cause of death for children under the age of 15 and that fighting cancer is a struggle for both the children and families involved.

[Lisa McGregor](#), chief of Pediatric Hematology-Oncology, Penn State Hershey Medical Center, provided her experience working as a pediatric oncologist and the current state of pediatric cancer research. McGregor discussed treatments, including chemotherapy, and the painful health effects children experience even if they survive the initial battle with cancer. She stated that further work has to be done in: studying cancer cells and tumor models and how they affect children; analyzing genes and proteins in cells to identify biochemical processes that drive tumor growth; and developing therapies that recruit the patient's immune system to help cure the cancer.

McGregor stressed that developing new treatments takes time and financial support, and that because childhood cancer is not a profitable business it is not a priority for many pharmaceutical companies. She reiterated the importance of funding research and expressed support for SB 74 and similar legislation.

[Elizabeth Fox](#), pediatric oncologist, Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, stressed three main points, including: the importance of increasing pediatric cancer awareness; that cancer is a spectrum of diseases that are increasingly categorized by genetic changes in cancer cells; and that support for access to new drugs and clinical trials must be expanded. She stated that new therapies need to be evaluated to specifically address how childhood cancer develops and to ensure children receiving treatment do not have to live with the side effects that stick with them following treatment.

Sen. Martin asked what the number one type of cancer among children is, and what funding from the bill would mean towards advancing research efforts. McGregor responded that the most common types of cancers among children are acute forms of leukemia, and others include brain tumors. She added that each type of cancer has to be treated in different ways based on where it starts and what kind of tumors form. She stated that clinical research is an expensive enterprise and that



the “infusion of money” would help build bigger laboratory research programs and put together “more robust” networks of research.

Fox commented that children with acute leukemia tend to do well with current therapies but with a cost of the side effects that come with those therapies. She stated that leukemia affects different people in many different ways. She added that funding for research can help grow “bio-banking” and collaboration among different research institutions and hospitals. She stressed the importance of collaboration among research institutions and that having more funding would allow them to create more clinical trials in more areas and hospitals.

Minority Chairman John Blake (D-Lackawanna) asked about the difficulty of conducting research and finding evidence to support insurance coverage for care. Fox asserted that the rarity of pediatric cancers is a concern and makes conducting clinical trials more difficult. She stated that clinical trials are essential in bringing new drugs to children and ensuring the best drugs with the least amount of side effects are developed.

[Sandy McHugh](#), Founding Hope, described the story of her son Jake’s battle with cancer. She stated that her son’s diagnosis of Peripheral T cell lymphoma-NOS was rare for children and that there was no clear path for his therapy. She added that he also did not qualify for many clinical trials because he was too young and that he died just six months after his diagnosis. She stressed the importance of SB 74, similar funding bills, and the dire need for finding treatments specifically designed for pediatric cancer.

Chairman Scott Hutchinson (R-Venango) thanked the McHugh’s for their strength in testifying and advocacy for the issue.

[Noelle Weinhold](#), pediatric cancer survivor, discussed her battle with kidney cancer starting at the age of four. She stated that her treatments lasted about six months but the side effects, including appendicitis and various forms of neuropathy, still cause her pain to this day. She added that the treatment she received was “archaic” and that the few cancer drugs that have been approved for children date back decades. She then described how she had to watch her friend suffer and lose her life to leukemia, and stressed that children should not have their childhoods and lives taken away from them.

Chairman Hutchinson and Chairman Blake both commended Weinhold for her “extraordinary” courage and promised to that the committee will do everything it can to advocate for SB 74 and similar legislation.

Sen. Martin also stressed the importance of facing pediatric cancer. Concluding, he stated that he hopes the bill can make a difference and incentivize the private sector to stand with those that are fighting pediatric cancer.

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Senate Judiciary Committee

9/25/19, 1:00 p.m., Hearing Room 1 North Office Building

By Matt Hess, Pennsylvania Legislative Services

The committee held a public hearing on behavioral health, second amendment rights, and gun-related issues.

Chairman Baker explained that the hearing was part two of the committee’s information gathering on the issue. “This is a very serious inquiry,” she stated. “We want to give everyone equal ability and have their voice heard.”

[Lt. Col. Scott Price](#), deputy commissioner of administration and professional responsibility, Pennsylvania State Police (PSP), provided the committee an overview of firearm terminology. “Perhaps moreso than any specific piece of information contained herein, testimony today demonstrates the complexity of the topic and the level of detail required to engage in fruitful discussion,” he stated. “Nonetheless, as we all struggle with the devastating personal losses and horrific societal costs resulting from the scourge of gun violence, time spent to facilitate productive discourse is well worth the investment as we, as a community, pursue what have proven to be elusive solutions.”



Sen. Santarsiero asked for PSP's position on Senate Bill 88. Lt. Col. Price said the State Police is in support of universal background checks but noted that "it would seem that the data is vague" in whether universal background checks are effective. "We don't think that should deter us from ameliorating what could be a potential vulnerability simply because no one exploited the vulnerability yet," he stated. Sen. Santarsiero questioned what other mechanism would there be to prevent individuals from not being able to purchase a gun from doing so with a background check. Lt. Col. Price stated "I don't know if there would be another effective enforcement mechanism."

Sen. Collett asked if there are benefits to the federal government now recognizing Pennsylvania's mental health relief process. Lt. Col. Price indicated that there is now additional grant funding available to the Pennsylvania Instant Check System (PICS) due to the federal recognition.

Chairman Baker inquired about the statistics regarding crimes committed by guns obtained legally versus illegally. Lt. Col. Price said the State Police recently developed an "ERG program" within the Commonwealth Law Enforcement Assistance Network (CLEAN) on the issue but there is not enough data yet to make any statistically significant assessment.

Minority Chairman Farnese said he is aware that there is a straw purchase law but asked what would occur when a person sells a gun to a person who uses it for a crime but the gun owner tells law enforcement that the gun was stolen or lost. Lt. Col. Price said that is a "hurdle" for law enforcement and can only trace the gun to the original owner. "If and when we find the firearm we can track it backwards but it is a significant investigative effort," he stated.

Sen. Martin asked what it would take to distinguish between crimes committed with the use of legal versus illegal guns. Lt. Col. Price reiterated that the State Police have developed an "ERG program" within the Commonwealth Law Enforcement Assistance Network (CLEAN) but the information is not available yet. Sen. Martin noted that those who purchase and use guns legally will feel the brunt of any gun control laws that are passed by the General Assembly.

[Joshua Prince](#), chief counsel, Firearms Industry Consulting Group, testified about psychotropic and selective serotonin reuptake inhibitor (SSRI) drugs and their potential effects on mental health. He asserted that the use of antidepressants has increased "exponentially" in recent years and that many SSRI drugs are not approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for children under the age of 18. He stated that SSRI drugs could have potentially dangerous side effects on children and have been linked to increased violent behavior.

Prince expressed concern for the lack of transparency from pharmaceutical companies on the effects of SSRI drugs. He said that pharmaceutical companies need to be held accountable for their lack of data and that the debate on gun violence and mental health needs to examine the root causes of mental health issues.

Chairman Baker shared that a family in her district believes that a suicide of a loved one was triggered by a change of medication and asked how much data there is related to SSRI and suicide. Prince said he has multiple studies available in his written testimony and opined that the pharmaceutical industry is hiding studies that show the dangers of SSRI. He urged the Senate Judiciary Committee to subpoena the pharmaceutical industry in order for them to disclose all their information regarding the drugs.

Chairman Baker inquired about the 302 process and individuals not seeking treatment out of fear that they will not be able to legally purchase a firearm. Prince argued that doctors too often involuntarily commit individuals and if it is an involuntary commitment and the person loses their ability to purchase a firearm. He said he has provided trainings to law enforcement entities related to the 302 process and urged more departments to receive training related to mental health situations.

Sen. Haywood noted that the legislation is examining Red Flag laws and are meant to be a temporary measure. He questioned why Prince believes someone who is flagged will be permanently banned from buying a firearm under federal law. Prince indicated that a potential Red Flag law would trigger a permanent disability provision related to involuntary commitments as well as "adjudications of incompetence" under federal law and prohibit that individual from ever being able to purchase a firearm.



Sen. Santarsiero questioned if Prince acknowledges that are constitutional limits to the Second Amendment. Prince said that would not be his personal belief and cited the Pennsylvania and United States constitution which specifies the right to own a firearm and there is an amendment process in place if the General Assembly wants to change the constitution. He noted that the U.S. Supreme Court has ruled in the Heller decision that the court said reasonable restrictions are permitted but did not define what a reasonable restriction is. Sen. Santarsiero asked if Prince believes that if Pennsylvania's current background check is a constitutionally valid requirement. Prince said there is nothing in the United States or Pennsylvania's constitutional that supports that background checks can be performed on a constitutional right. Sen. Santarsiero noted that freedom of religion is a constitutional right and asked if states could prohibit a religious group from engaging in human sacrifice. Prince stated «I believe that is a decision dependent upon the people of that state and under their state constitution to decide; there is nothing under the U.S. Constitution that provides that mechanism.»

Sen. Santarsiero questioned if the Firearms Industry Consulting Group is funded by firearm manufacturers. Prince said he represents firms that do manufacture firearms.

Sen. Yaw thanked Prince for bringing up SSRIs and noted that he has done a lot of work on the opioid issue and said the drugs were known to be addictive but the pharmaceutical industry hid the data.

Sen. Yaw asked for clarification regarding voluntary and involuntary commitments as it relates to firearms. Prince explained that an individual loses their right to own a firearm if they are involuntarily committed.

Chairman Farnese asked if Prince personally believes if there should be any restrictions placed on firearms. Prince said he acknowledges that the United States Supreme Court has issued opinions that «somewhat eviscerate what my personal opinions would be on those constitutional rights.»

[Adam Skaggs](#), chief counsel, Giffords Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence, discussed gun control laws backed by social science evidence and legal precedent, asserting such laws do not violate the Second Amendment. He detailed court cases that established the Second Amendment is not offended by reasonable regulations pertaining to guns in public, dangerous weapons, possession of firearms by criminals, commercial sale of firearms, and firearms in sensitive places. Specifically calling back to *District of Columbia v. Heller*, Skaggs claimed that there is nothing in the Constitution that prevents the General Assembly from taking “bold action to save lives from gun violence.”

Chairman Baker indicated that members have expressed concern about the ex parte portion of the extreme risk protections orders (ERPOs) and asked how other states have addressed those concerns. Skaggs said 17 states and the District of Columbia have passed ERPO laws and have provided law enforcement and health professionals the ability to intervene when a person is in crisis. He noted that the ex parte portion of the law is not unique to extreme risk laws and it is basic protocol for situations such as domestic violence situations. He added that there are provisions in the proposal to address situations where there is a vindictive spouse although those actual cases are rare.

Chairman Baker asked what happens in other states where someone has been issued an ERPO but there are additional adults living in the house that also own guns. Skaggs indicated that is a case by case basis in other states but emphasized that the ERPO are not an “end around for mass confiscation and have not been used that way.” He noted that studies have shown that states that have implemented ERPO laws have seen a decrease in suicides.

Sen. Pittman asked if Skaggs supports a reduction in the depiction of firearm violence in video games and movies. Skaggs said it is not something his organization recommended in the past but indicated that there are depictions of violence that can be troubling and getting those industries to examine that could be fruitful but emphasized “the easy access to guns by those who intend to commit harm and in a state like Pennsylvania where you can purchase a gun from a stranger without a background check is a big part of the problem and that is what we have focused on.”

Sen. Pittman said murder is illegal and a number of things are able to kill people. He expressed concern violence in video games and movies and noted that the lead actor in the movie “The Joker” walked out of an interview and was offended when



asked if he was worried that the film would perpetrate violence. Skaggs said he was not familiar with the incident but said it is up to every industry to address gun violence and noted that there has been an unprecedented level of corporate engagement on the issue including a letter calling on the United States Senate to pass gun control measures.

Sen. Pittman said the glorification of violence in video games and movies concerns him. "I think it is a significant concern in our society and I question an inanimate object such as a firearm as being the primary responsibility for these incidents when human involvement is what makes it deadly when there is evil intent," he stated.

Sen. Regan questioned if there are officer safety issues when they would have to remove firearms from an individual's house when an ERPO is issued. Skaggs said there are threats to law enforcement everyday in carrying out their duties and noted that domestic violence issues are sometimes the most dangerous time for officers. Sen. Regan said the situation is different because a domestic violence incident does not involve a perpetrator getting 24 hours to prepare for a police officer to remove guns from a residence.

Sen. Regan asked if the potential exists with ERPO laws where an ex-spouse can be vindictive and get an ERPO issued. Skaggs said it is possible but that has not been the case in other states that have ERPO laws.

Chairman Baker asked if ERPO laws have been challenged in other states. Skaggs indicated that the laws have been challenged but none have been successful so far.

Sen. Haywood shared a letter from a constituent whose husband killed himself with a firearm and urged passage of an ERPO law in Pennsylvania.

Sen. Martin questioned if firearms should only be an item that is removed from an individual's house when an ERPO is issued and asked if the current 302 process is more appropriate because it removes the person from any object that may harm themselves or others. Skaggs said ERPO laws are a narrowly tailored tool that can be used to prevent harm to an individual or others.

Sen. Santarsiero asked if Skaggs was aware of any mass murders in the United States committed with knives. Skaggs said he was not aware of any such incidents.

[Greg Rowe](#), director of legislation and policy, Pennsylvania District Attorneys Association, spoke in support of legislation that would close a loophole in current law. "If the person who has been convicted of the prior violent crime (e.g. murder, rape, aggravated assault, burglary, drug trafficking) possesses a firearm, he or she has committed a crime under Pennsylvania law and is subject to prosecution. But if the conviction was for an inchoate-e.g. attempt, conspiracy, or solicitation to commit any of those specifically enumerated crimes, that person has not broken Pennsylvania law and cannot be held accountable," he stated. "Why can someone who is convicted of murder, rape, or burglary be prosecuted for illegal gun possession, but someone convicted of attempted rape, conspiracy to commit murder, or solicitation to commit robbery cannot? It is simply because of an oversight in statutory drafting that never came to light until the Pennsylvania Supreme Court's 2011 ruling in *Commonwealth v. Clegg*."

[Fran Chardo](#), district attorney, Dauphin County, added that the legislative fix is straightforward and simple and will not affect the rights of any law-abiding individual to possess a firearm. "It does not create any new categories of prohibitions from possessing firearms. We strongly support legislation that simply adds attempt, conspiracy, and solicitation to the very same list of serious crimes that already prohibit a person from possessing a firearm under state law," he stated. "In so doing, such legislation will only subject those who have a prior conviction for a serious crime and who subsequently choose to illegally carry a firearm to a criminal penalty. Closing this loophole is reasonable, straightforward, and necessary."

Chardo disputed Prince's claim that an individual will be permanently barred from being able to own a firearm if they have an ERPO and said a District Attorney is able to expunge an arrest or conviction. "If a court determines it is appropriate to expunge that, the federal government in my opinion would accept the state court's expungement order and would not exist



on any database because it would be expunged,” he stated.

[Richard Keuerleber](#), sheriff, York County, discussed the sheriff’s office’s role with both the issuance of a Pennsylvania License to Carry Firearms and the changes to the Pennsylvania Uniform Firearms Act that have gone into effect with Act 79 of 2018. He provided the following overview of the process:

- A sheriff has 45 days to conduct an investigation to determine an individual’s eligibility to be issued a license.
- A License to Carry Firearms application requires an individual to include two references who are not family members;
- Included in the investigation is a background check conducted on the individual through the PA Instant Check System (PICS) to determine if the records indicate the individual is prohibited by law from carrying a firearm;
- A sheriff may deny an individual the right to a PA License to Carry Firearms if there is reason to believe that the character and reputation of the individual are such that they would be likely to act in a manner dangerous to public safety;
- If the PICS check is approved and the subject is believed to be of good character, the sheriff may issue a License to Carry Firearms;
- A License to Carry Firearms allows an individual to carry a firearm concealed on or about their person, or in a vehicle throughout the Commonwealth;
- A License to Carry Firearms is valid for a period of five years, unless sooner revoked.

[Lt. Col. Scott Price](#), deputy commissioner of administration and professional responsibility, Pennsylvania State Police, discussed PSP’s efforts to provide gun violence protections for Pennsylvanians. He stated that PSP, under Governor Tom Wolf’s executive order on gun violence prevention, has worked with the Special Council on Gun Violence, developed best practices for gun buyback programs, and expanded the “See Something/ Send Something” reporting program, among other things. Lt. Col. Price added that PSP is supportive of universal background checks, extreme risk protections orders (ERPOs), and other legislation requiring lost and stolen guns to be reported to law enforcement.

Lt. Col. Price noted that PSP is also supportive of proposals in [Senate Bill 88](#), [Senate Bill 128](#), and [Senate Bill 483](#), but expressed concerns with the implementation and enforceability of some of the language in the bills. Concluding, he stressed that the need for getting illegal guns off the street should not infringe upon the rights of legal gun owners, and reducing a complex issue like gun violence requires partnerships and collaboration.

Chairman Baker noted there are people with large gun collections and inquired about the ability of small departments to store guns. Keuerleber said the county approved a larger space for storage and noted that his department recently seized 130 firearms. He indicated that it is an issue for smaller departments and there have been conversations about departments combining resources to find appropriate storage space.

Sen. Regan asked what crime is the most prominent with the use of firearms. Chardo identified drug trafficking as mostly closely associated with firearms. Sen. Regan questioned what percentage of the firearms in drug trafficking are illegally possessed. Chardo said more than 95 percent are possessed illegally.

Sen. Regan questioned if giving an individual 24 hours notice under an ERPO law creates an officer safety issue. Keuerleber stated it does.

Sen. Pittman inquired about the expungement process for ERPO and asked if it would require an individual to have legal counsel. Chardo said the legislation includes a right to counsel under the ERPO process. Sen. Pittman asked who would pay for legal counsel. Chardo indicated that it would be at the county’s expense but it would depend on the county. Sen. Pittman expressed concern about the due process under ERPO legislation. Chairman Baker noted that the individual would have to provide their own counsel if they make a certain amount of money.

[Shira Goodman](#), executive director, CeaseFire Pennsylvania, discussed various gun control legislation, including ERPOs, municipal regulations, background checks, and mandatory reporting of lost and stolen firearms. She detailed gun violence



statistics in Pennsylvania and stated that Act 79, which disarms domestic abusers, was a “critical step” in keeping Pennsylvania families safer. She stated that mental illness is often blamed for gun violence but that those living with mental illness are more likely to be victims, and that mass shootings highlight the deadly results of when those with mental illness or in crisis have easy access to guns.

Goodman acknowledged the success of the Pennsylvania Instant Criminal Background Check System (PICS) and stressed the importance of conducting thorough background checks on gun purchases. Concluding, she urged the committee to adopt “commonsense gun laws” to save lives without infringing upon the rights of law-abiding gun owners.

[Jen Pauliukonis](#), director of state affairs, Educational Fund to Stop Gun Violence and Coalition to Stop Gun Violence, testified in support ERPOs. “In determining whether to issue an order, judges use an evidence-based criteria to assess the individual’s risk - such as recent threats or acts of violence towards self or others, domestic abuse, and unlawful or reckless use of a firearm - among others. If an order is granted, firearms are temporarily removed. Americans are overwhelmingly supportive of the policy - recent polling shows that 70 percent of Americans support ERPOs,” she stated. “ERPOs are modeled after state domestic violence protective orders and incorporate many of the same due process protections integral to these protection orders. The due process protections afforded by the ex parte order are nearly identical in substance and form to those afforded by the domestic violence ex parte or temporary protective order. Ex parte domestic violence protective orders have been routinely upheld against due process challenges.”

Chairman Baker said one issue with ERPO legislation is defining “significant risk” and asked how they would define it. Goodman indicated that ultimately it is up to a judge to define significant risk and spoke in support providing judicial education on the issue.

Chairman Farnese requested the study regarding the relationship between the ERPO law in Connecticut and the prevention suicide. Pauliukonis said she would provide that information to the committee.

[Marybeth Christiansen](#), state chapter leader, Moms Demand Action, spoke in support of ERPOs and explained that on average, gun violence claims the lives of 1,503 Pennsylvanians each year and of those 1,503 gun deaths, 943 are firearm suicides. She said firearm suicides account for 63 percent of gun deaths in Pennsylvania, whereas firearm homicides account for 36 percent of gun deaths in the Commonwealth. She added that on average, every nine hours, someone in Pennsylvania will die by firearm suicide.

“Extreme Risk laws empower family and household members and law enforcement officers -- the people who are most likely to observe warning signs of danger-- to intervene in order to temporarily prevent someone in crisis from accessing firearms. These laws can help de-escalate emergency situations and are a proven way to intercede and avert gun violence tragedies, such as firearm suicide and mass shootings. Following the February 2018 mass shooting in Parkland, Florida, both students and teachers reported that the shooter had displayed threatening behavior in the months leading up to that tragedy, his mother contacted law enforcement on multiple occasions regarding his behavior, and he was known to possess firearms. In response to that tragedy, Florida passed its own Extreme Risk law. Since its passage, the Florida law has been invoked numerous times in cases of potential school violence,” Christiansen stated. “In addition to ensuring public safety and affording opportunities for people in crisis to seek help, Extreme Risk laws provide robust due process protections to safeguard the rights of all parties involved. Only limited groups of people, with direct knowledge of the circumstances of the person in crisis, may request an Extreme Risk order from a court. In many states, the only individuals who may request the order are law enforcement or family and/or household members. A limited group of petitioners makes certain that only people who are very close to the person at risk of harming themselves or others, or law enforcement officers, who are trained to identify and respond to such risks, can make such requests. No matter which entity or individual makes the request, the petitioner is required to present relevant, reliable and sworn evidence for the court to consider in making its determination. Existing Extreme Risk laws provide criminal penalties for those who knowingly file false petitions or maliciously seek an ERPO with the intent to harass the respondent.”

[Kaegan Mays-Williams](#), policy counsel, Everytown For Gun Safety, emphasized the need for comprehensive background



checks. Due to a gap in state law, prohibited purchasers can legally purchase rifles and shotguns by buying them from unlicensed sellers, including sellers they find online or at gun shows, with no background check and no questions asked, she said.

“In 2018, there were 18,669 posts on the online firearms marketplace Armslist.com for firearm sales in Pennsylvania where no background check was required. Under current Pennsylvania law, background checks are required for all handgun sales, including unlicensed sales. The Pennsylvania legislature has already demonstrated that, with respect to handguns, it agrees with what the research shows--that background checks are associated with reduced rates of firearm homicide, suicide and firearm trafficking, and are the backbone of any comprehensive gun violence prevention policy. It is time to extend Pennsylvania’s private sale background check requirement to all firearm sales,” she stated. “As the recent mass shooting in Odessa tragically illustrated, it remains far too easy for prohibited purchasers to obtain deadly firearms without a background check. A private sale loophole enabled the Odessa shooter--who would have failed a background check if buying a firearm from a license dealer--to obtain the weapon he used to kill at least seven people and injured 25 others, including three police officers. In order to ensure that firearms do not end up in the hands of prohibited purchasers, background checks must be required for all firearm sales.”

Sen. Yaw noted that 14 people die every day from a drug overdose in Pennsylvania and 150 people nationwide every day. “It’s upsetting to me that people are not marching in the streets,” he stated. Christiansen acknowledged that the opioid epidemic is a major problem.

Sen. Santarsiero agreed that there is an opioid epidemic and the legislature has taken steps to curb it. He emphasized that there is also a gun violence epidemic and the General Assembly has not done anything on the issue. “Let’s have a vote and see where people are,” he stated. “I’ve been fighting on this issue and we could not even get a hearing on any of these bills.”

[David Weber](#), state director, National Rifle Association, testified that there is no evidence that the gun control legislation being considered would reduce violent crime, and that gun control supporters have misconceptions about private firearm transfers. He stated that banning “assault weapons” and “standard capacity magazines” has not been proven to stop mass shootings, and that the ownership of semi-automatic firearms and accessories is backed by the U.S. Constitution.

Weber asserted that most ERPO and red flag laws strip constitutional rights without due process. Concluding, he claimed that a recent reduction in violent crimes does not stem from any firearms regulations and that the General Assembly should look to address mental health issues before “burdening” the Second Amendment rights of law-abiding gun owners.

[Walt Gibson](#), Second Amendment advocate, shared how his father was a victim of gun violence but spoke against gun control legislation. “There are good people and bad people in this world and you cannot render the bad people harmless by rendering the good people defenseless,” he stated.

Gibson referred to Sen. Santarsiero’s earlier comment about there being no mass stabbings and noted that there was a mass stabbing in Garden Grove, California in August that killed four people and injured two.

Chairman Baker asked why the NRA believes the ERPO law is unnecessary. Weber said ERPO legislation is unnecessary because there is already the 302 process and protection from abuse orders are already in place and affirmed that he would be willing to work with the legislature to tweak those laws where necessary. [Jonathan Goldstein](#), attorney, speaking on behalf of the NRA, added that the main issue with ERPO laws is due process concerns.

Sen. Santarsiero asked if the NRA acknowledges that there are constitutional limits on Second Amendment rights. Goldstein responded “Heller is the law.” Sen. Santarsiero asked if closing the background check loophole on the private sale of long guns would impede Second Amendment rights. Goldstein said the NRA opposes the legislation and cited an NRA survey of prison inmates who committed crimes with guns which found that 80 percent of inmates used a handgun in the crime and 1.7 percent of the firearms came from gun shows and flea markets. Gibson said he and many others are opposed to universal background checks because it would lay the groundwork for a national gun registry.



Sen. Santarsiero asked the NRA is against all background checks. Goldstein said the commonwealth has a long history of a successful background check effort and PICS is “largely working.”

Sen. Santarsiero cited a recent finding that one in five officers killed in the line of duty were killed by an assault weapon. He added that magazine size should also be addressed. “The idea that we can never pass any kind of reasonable gun violence prevention legislation because it is somehow an infringement on someone’s right when all we are trying to do is deal with this very real gun violence epidemic we have in this country is I think absurd and I hope at some point our colleagues in the state legislature will bring these votes up for a vote,” he stated.

Chairman Farnese said he has been in the Senate for nine years but no significant legislation on gun control has been enacted. “We have 22 members in the Senate. That’s 5.1 million that we represent. Where’s their due process? Where’s their opportunity,” he stated. “There is no restriction that is permissible in the eyes of the NRA. There is no opportunity to talk about a reasonable restriction. It’s dead like you heard from the House yesterday.”

Chairman Farnese emphasized that this is the first public hearing on gun control bills in his time in the Senate and requested that the NRA not block the bills from coming up for a vote such as limiting large capacity magazines. “You say you want to talk about straw purchases and other laws. Show us,” he stated. “Sooner or later you will deal with us and deal with the people here.” Goldstein said the NRA has been an active partner with the legislature. Chairman Farnese indicated that Weber’s predecessor did not engage with Democratic members of the legislature on any of the issues. Weber affirmed that he is willing to work with Chairman Farnese.

[Kim Stolfer](#), president, Firearms Owners Against Crime, spoke against all of the gun control measures discussed at the hearing. “It is the oldest mistake in Congress or in the Pennsylvania Legislature. ‘We must do something!’ It’s a classic error of logic known as *appelare desperadi*, the appeal to desperation. It inevitably leads to disaster. You must do the right thing, not just anything. This requires thought, reason, facts and a solid plan. Stop perpetual broadcasts and publication of mass murders, especially from the past. Refrain from gratuitous or repetitious portrayal of mass murderers’ names and images. The criminals want fame. Deny them their infamy,” he stated. “At the same time, we simply must foster a culture of respect for all human life, from conception to natural death. Also, in response to mass shootings, the response should be focused on the shooter’s depraved heart and the religion or philosophy that drives him, not on the instrument used to kill. Violence is not something new to this world. Before guns there was violence and mass killings. What has changed is the mass production of violence and its glamorization. Movies and video games romanticize violence or make it grotesque, desensitizing the conscious and natural disdain towards it. When the heart becomes numb to violence and taught to act on passions, a violent reaction will occur when someone decides to act. As Jesus said, it is not what is put into the mouth that defiles a man, but what comes out of the heart.”

[Dr. Val Finnell](#), Pennsylvania director, Gun Owners of America (GOA), said the organization is opposed to any legislation that would ban the ownership of semi-automatic firearms, restrict magazine capacity, ERPOs, or establish universal background checks (UBCs). “Justification for semi-automatic rifle bans and magazine restrictions are often based upon the false premise that there is an ‘epidemic’ of mass shootings. No such ‘epidemic’ exists. The previous Federal assault weapons ban of 1994 was proven ineffective by the government’s own analysis. Semi-automatic rifles are protected under the Second Amendment since they are arguably suitable for military purposes and are in common use. ERPOs or “Red Flag” laws are ineffective, dangerous to police and civilians, and are an egregious violation of basic due process rights guaranteed under the Commonwealth and US Constitutions. UBCs would not have stopped the most recent mass shootings but would increase the “false positive” rate in the NICS and PICS instant check systems. These bogus denials would impede firearms purchases by law-abiding citizens without affecting criminal acquisition of firearms. These false denials could also disproportionately affect minorities. UBCs would not deter criminals from acquiring firearms. Moreover, any UBC system could very well lead to future registration schemes and confiscation of firearms,” he stated ““The legislation, represented by several bills referred to the Senate Judiciary Committee, constitute a violation of Constitutional rights under Article 1, Section 21 of the Pennsylvania Constitution and the Second Amendment of the U.S. Constitution,” Dr. Finnell stated. “Instead of unconstitutional and ineffective gun control legislation, Pennsylvania GOA members support the elimination of gun free zones where 94 percent of mass shootings occur. Additionally, passing “Constitutional Carry” will afford Pennsylvanians



greater freedom in protecting themselves and their families.”

Chairman Baker asked how GOA would address current laws instead of implementing ERPO. Dr. Finnell said the legislature needs to eliminate the lifelong prohibition to firearm ownership if an individual is involuntarily committed. He noted that members of the military often do not seek treatment because they do not want their rights eliminated.

Sen. Collett cited page three of Dr. Finnell’s written testimony which said that rapes declined by 37 percent once the ban on assault weapons was lifted. She inquired about the link between the number rapes and the elimination of the ban. Dr. Finnell said violent crime was higher during the time in which the assault weapons ban was in place.

[Dr. Andrew Morral](#), senior behavioral scientist, RAND Corporation, summarized his testimony into the following three points:

- There is some rigorous research on the effects of different gun laws that could help inform Pennsylvania’s decisions on gun laws;
- We do not have a comprehensive understanding of the full range of costs and benefits associated with any gun laws;
- Underinvestment in gun policy and gun violence research leaves Pennsylvania and other states with little scientific information on which to base policy. Pennsylvania might consider funding research in these areas to clarify which of its laws, policies, and programs are having their intended effects and where new policies or programs are needed.

Chairman Baker asked if the RAND Corporation takes any position on gun control. Dr. Morral said the RAND Corporation does not take a position on any legislation. “Our goal is trying to understand and translate information what the existing scientific information does say and could be useful to legislatures,” he stated.

Chairman Baker questioned what other states are studying in relation to the issue of gun violence. Dr. Morral said there are a variety of issues including researchers at the University of California - Davis who recently published a review of court records on 159 cases in which a California judge granted an extreme risk protection order; those cases represent a little more than one-third of all 414 such orders issued in California since the law was implemented. He added that Pennsylvania could benefit from studying issues such as how effective PICS is at deterring prohibited individuals from obtaining a gun.

Sen. Santarsiero and Chairman Farnese thanked Chairman Baker for holding the hearing. Chairman Baker thanked the committee and staff and the testifiers for their work over the course of the two day hearing.



MAAC

Medical Assistance Advisory Committee

9/26/19, 10:00 a.m., Lecture Hall 246,248, Temple University Harrisburg, 234 Strawberry Square
By Harrison Cann, Sheri Melnick and Robert Cochran, Pennsylvania Legislative Services

The Medical Assistance Advisory Committee (MAAC) held its regular monthly meeting.

Chairman Russ McDaid was joined by the following individuals participated in September's MAAC meeting:

- Kathy Cubit, Center for Advocacy for the Rights and Interests of the Elderly
- Sally Kozak, deputy secretary, Office of Medical Assistance Programs
- Deborah Ann Shoemaker, Pennsylvania Psychiatric Society
- Laval Miller-Wilson, Pennsylvania Health Law Project
- Jamie Buchenauer, director, Fee-for-Service Programs
- Jennifer Swinnich, Pennsylvania Medical Society
- Cindi Christ, chief operating officer, Pennsylvania Association of Community Health Centers
- Nancy Murray, the Arc of Greater Pittsburgh
- Sonia Brookins, Philadelphia Welfare Rights Organization
- Dr. Mark Goldstein, Pennsylvania Dental Association
- Terri Cathers, Pharmacy Director, OMAP
- Angela Zaydon, Pennsylvania Pharmacists Association
- Kevin Hancock, Deputy Secretary, OLTL
- Kelly Leite, Penn State Hershey Pediatrics
- Kendra Snuffer, chief of staff of OMHSAS

The minutes from the July MAAC meeting were unanimously approved.

OFFICE OF MEDICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS (OMAP) UPDATE

Kozak began by providing updates on the budget for the Department of Human Services (DHS) and OMAP for fiscal year 2019-2020. She stated that DHS's budget was \$39.3 billion, a slight decrease from \$39.5 billion from this past year. She stressed that the decrease in the budget does not reflect a decrease in models of service.

Kozak added that OMAP's budget was \$18.7 billion, as compared to \$20.3 billion the year prior. She stated that decreases were due to the suspension of Health Insurance Provider Fee, which accounted for \$208 million. She detailed other changes, adding that capitation delays accounted for \$587 million, fee-for-service (FFS) and Community HealthChoices (CHC) accounted for \$485 million, and enrollment adjustments made up about \$294 million. She noted that OMAP also received funding from the Lottery, tobacco management, and hospital assessments.

Displaying a spending breakdown, Kozak stated that: about \$14.3 billion, or 76 percent goes toward capitation; \$2.4 billion, or 13 percent, goes toward FFS; \$0.8 billion, 4 percent, goes toward Medicare Part D; \$0.2 billion, 1 percent, goes toward the



Medical Assistance Transportation Program (MATP); and \$1 billion, 3 percent, goes toward other appropriations, including compensated care and expanded medical services for women, workers with disabilities, and more.

Kozak then described changes in legislation that will enact changes to MATP. She stated that the legislation required DHS to collect information from stakeholders about the potential impact of implementing a broker MATP and the costs that come with it. She added that there is a group including county commissioners, the Department of Transportation (PennDOT), and others to provide an analysis.

She noted that there was an extension granted for the deadline and that the preliminary report should be completed by the end of October, with the final analysis being sent to the legislature in December. She expressed that in the meantime, MATP will continue to operate as it always has.

Kozak then provided updates on the Statewide Preferred Drug List (PDL). She stated that the plan is still to move the PDL as of January 1, 2020, and that it will replace the existing system of individual PDLs for transitioning managed care organizations (MCOs). She added that Act 19 requires DHS to conduct a study of the projected costs and impact of the PDL change and that, after a deadline extension, the analysis was delivered to the legislature on Tuesday.

Kozak said that an increase for managed care assessments, going from \$19.87 to \$24.95, generated \$1.7 billion. She said that the statewide quality care assessment approved in the 2018-2019 budget will have an estimated \$295 million in funds and would help support Medical Assistance (MA) programs. Additionally, she noted that the Philadelphia hospital assessment reauthorization was approved and that funding from the assessment goes back to the Philadelphia hospitals.

Concluding, Kozak described DHS's priorities for the 2019-2020 year. She stated that the priorities include: to continue the value-based purchasing strategy, to continue to use integrated whole-person-centered care, to continue supporting the Centers of Excellence (COE) combating the opioid crisis, to continue providing options for Medicaid funding for the evidence-based home visiting program, and to continue working on the Medicaid management information system.

McDaid asked if savings from case load reductions were factored in to the budget. Kozak said it was not factored in.

Lloyd Wertz, Family Training and Advocacy Center, asked if there was any follow-up with the Department of Corrections (DOC) regarding the impact of the PDL on statewide prisons and individuals using drugs for relief. Cathers responded that when the PDL is finalized it will be shared with DOC, but that she does not know if it will change DOC's budget or drug purchasing process.

When asked if Governor Tom Wolf's [executive order](#) addressing the support of vulnerable populations had any effect on the budget for protective services, Kozak responded that nothing was added to the Medical Assistance budget but that she cannot speak for other offices. She added that DHS is looking into revamping programs to work in cooperation with the executive order. Hancock commented that he does not know for sure if there was anything added in the Department of Aging in terms of protective services but that he can find out for next month's meeting.

When asked what the estimation was for changes in populations served, Kozak responded there had been a decrease in those eligible for Medical Assistance coming into 2019, so the the estimated reduction was based on a presumed further reduction from the economy continuing to grow.

William Peterson, Center for Community Building, asked to what extent MATP spending would decrease going into a brokerage system. He noted that although the state can get funding from the federal government for changing systems, other states that have done the same have seen cost increases and ride decreases.

Kozak responded that the analysis into the effects of a brokerage system will look its impact on DHS, different counties, and overall costs. She noted that DHS anticipated savings from the enhanced federal match that the state is currently not eligible to receive. She added that the analysis will continue to include all stakeholders, including county commissioners,



transportation providers, and PennDOT.

Miller-Wilson asked if stakeholders meetings with consumers are also taking place. Kozak detailed DHS's process of seeking feedback on MATP issues, dating back to the request for information (RFI) in 2015. She added that there was a lot of feedback from consumers and various organizations, including transportation providers and county commissioners.

Kozak said that when the switch to a brokerage system was mandated, a survey was distributed and that DHS is still looking to meet with and share information with a broad range of constituents. McDaid added that if anyone thinks there are any constituent groups being left out that they should let DHS or the chair know and they can ensure their concerns are heard.

Kozak concluded that health choices procurement has no update.

OFFICE OF LONG-TERM LIVING (OLTL) UPDATE:

Hancock detailed the OLTL budget for 2019-2020 and provided an update to the CHC plan. He stated that factors in the budget included: maintaining FFS programs for non-CHC zones, funding three new CHC zones in January 2020, and maintaining existing service levels for participants.

He added that shifts in funding included areas from legacy appropriations to CHC appropriations. Additionally, Hancock said, the budget reflects a full year of operations in the southwest and southeast CHC zones and actuarially sound rates for CHC, MCOs, physical health, and long-term services and supports.

Hancock continued describing budget adjustment factors, stating that OLTL will continue its inter-governmental programs for nursing facilities and expand the total number of individuals covered in OLTL waivers. He added that the budget includes funds to establish a single responsible entity for functional eligibility determinations and that it is funded fed through Aging Well.

He said that the budget assumes expansion of the Living Independence for the Elderly (LIFE) program everywhere except Pike County, which will be implemented at a later date. He noted that OLTL wants LIFE to be an alternative for CHC, so it must be made available statewide.

Hancock then discussed the specifics of the budget and ongoing OLTL initiatives. He stated that the budget from the General Fund for 2019-2020 was \$3.3 billion, which was up from about \$2.8 billion in 2018-2019. He noted that the \$549,844,000 increase is one of the largest increases of any year in the commonwealth. He gave credit to the legislature for recognizing that long-term living is a major concern for a growing part of the population and that its programs do not have a waitlist, unlike other states.

McDaid commented that in addition to the General Fund, OLTL receives funding from tobacco and lottery funds. Hancock noted that the budget includes all of the funding but that the majority comes from the General Fund.

Hancock detailed state, federal and other funding from year to year. He showed that funding increased from \$8.9 billion in 2018-2019 to \$9.7 billion in 2019-2020. He noted that CHC is now the largest of the appropriations because it includes a full year of implementation in the southwest and southeast zones, and a half year in the three new zones: northeast, northwest, and Lehigh/Capital.

He noted that shifts from other appropriations, including \$950 million from home and community-based services, and an increase in appropriations contributed to a \$4 billion increase for CHC. He added that long-term managed care, which includes LIFE, saw a \$9 million increase for the new statewide expansion.

McDaid clarified that the LIFE appropriation only includes a half year of implementation, so numbers are expected to be larger as the program grows. Hancock also stated that disability services shifted about \$481 million to CHC and that



attendant care shifted \$318 to CHC as well.

Hancock then provided updates to CHC implementation in the three new zones. He stated that the September and October timeline includes 72 participant information sessions, 11 additional sessions by the Pennsylvania Council on Independent Living, participant packet mailings, participant outreach calls, and ongoing contact activities.

The November and December timelines, he added, include the November 13 deadline for plan selection before participants are auto-assigned and the December 20 deadline for plan selection before January 1. Hancock stressed that OLTL is taking many measures to provide outreach to participants.

Hancock then discussed the various provider summits that will be taking place. The provider summits, he explained, will take place in the northwest zone on October 8 at Clarion University, in the northeast zone on October 21 at Marywood University, and in the Lehigh/Capital zone on October 28 at Kutztown University.

He noted that at the summits, an overview of CHC will be provided in the morning, breakout sessions will be offered in the afternoon, and information regarding home and community-based services, service coordination, nursing facilities, behavioral health, physical health, and transportation will be covered. Hancock also stressed the importance of MATP and sharing information regarding any possible changes.

Hancock laid out the number of provider networks in each area. He showed that AmeriHealth Caritas will have 215 nursing facilities, Pennsylvania Health and Wellness will have 127, and University of Pittsburgh Medical Center (UPMC) will have 240. He added that AmeriHealth Caritas will have 93 hospitals, Pennsylvania Health and Wellness will have 57, and UPMC will have 61.

He noted that all other nursing facilities and hospital contracts are still in the contract negotiation process. He stressed that hospitals are being made aware that there is a significant auto-assignment rate in the CHC program and that if they do not contract with all three MCOs there could be a large number of people without a hospital.

He concluded by stating that CHC is training MCOs on billing and invoicing, person-centered service plans, and electronic visit verification.

Miller-Wilson asked about the potential jeopardy for consumers if hospitals are not getting contracts. Hancock responded that it would be very dramatic if thousands of individuals will not be able to access the most prominent health system in their area. He noted that individuals will be able to make a plan change following an auto-assignment but that it could take up to a month for that process to take place.

Miller-Wilson asked why there is difficulty having hospitals agree to contracts. Hancock responded that he can only speculate but that CHC is unique in its relationship to Medicare. He said that some providers could be interested in putting a managed care partner in an area to take on the market share of Medicare Advantage plans.

Miller-Wilson noted that it is acceptable for Medicare Advantage plans to market to consumers but that he wishes there were more opportunities for the state to regulate providers' ability to negotiate contracts. Hancock clarified that CHC is a Medicaid program. He noted that MCOs have flexibility in their contracts but that he will ensure providers are made aware of the risks being raised by not having contracts.

Miller-Wilson asked if it is defensible for a hospital to not have a contract. Hancock responded that it is a tough defense. Miller-Wilson asked if assignments could not be given to individuals in areas where there are no hospitals. Hancock responded that it is concerning that some do not have contracts but that there would have to be a mechanism for MCOs to develop a contract in a specific area.

Cubit asked if the enrollment process would trigger a consumer to go through an Area Agency on Aging (AAA) for assessment.



Hancock responded that normally AAAs reach out about enrollment and would work with the participant to schedule a visit and help them get through enrollment.

Cubit asked if that is through the Pennsylvania Individualized Assessments system. Hancock responded that the independent enrollment broker asked to have a home visit be moved to the front of the enrollment process. He stated that it will help people with questions regarding the Medicaid eligibility process answered.

OFFICE OF MENTAL HEALTH AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE SERVICES (OMHSAS) UPDATE:

Kendra Snuffer, chief of staff, OMHSAS, said that Dr. Dale Dare will be returning to the office on September 30. She added that upcoming forums and webinars will be held throughout the commonwealth regarding intensive behavioral health services, which provide training and opportunities to learn about providers. Snuffer added that two forums will be held in western Pennsylvania: one in central Pennsylvania; two in southeastern Pennsylvania, although more may be added because of capacity concerns; and two in northeastern Pennsylvania. Two statewide webinars will be conducted by the office as well, she claimed.

Snuffer announced that Dawn Hamme is now working as the department's director of the Bureau of Financial Management and Administration. Hamme provided the OMHSAS budget update.

Hamme said the funding for mental health services through DHS is \$1.15 billion, which includes all the base funds for community programs, Community Hospital Integration Projects Program (CHIPPP), system improvement plans in the southeast, block grants, and state operating facilities, including the six state hospitals and the South Mountain Restoration Center. She added that drug and alcohol services equaled \$152 million, which is an increase of \$1.56 million. She said the Medicaid funding decreased slightly to \$3.8 billion. She indicated the office is aligning with CHC and OMAP regarding the way in which capitation payments are made. She added that the figure looks lower, but it's not a decrease in funding per month. Hamme stated the office continued the special pharmaceuticals program, which had \$92,000.

Hamme indicated that HealthChoices is 75 percent of the OMHSAS budget total, MA fee-for-service is one percent, DHS is one percent, and the mental health services block grant is 23 percent. For fiscal year 2019-20, mental health services appropriations has increased to \$1.15 billion, increasing from \$1 billion last year, Hamme reiterated. Of the \$53 million appropriated for the behavioral health special initiative (BHSI), \$39 million was appropriated, which includes COE funding. She said that all COEs are funded through managed care HealthChoices, but \$10 million is going to be distributed for family services. For MA capitation for HealthChoices, Hamme said a decrease occurred. She provided slides regarding state hospitals and the South Mountain Restoration Center. She said funding for 45 new CHIPPP centers was \$2.8 million.

Wertz asked if the office is able to determine if funding for community mental health services has reached the pre-2012 figure before the "ill-advised" 10 percent cuts that year. Both Snuffer and Hamme did not know the answer and asked if he meant if funding levels returned to that year's total. Wertz questioned whether services which were cut by 10 percent in 2012 would be restored due to the revenue surplus in the budget, which was "largely unexpected." Both Snuffer and Hamme said they did not know the answer, but would provide a response. Hamme said some funding was restored, but would provide Wertz with a comparison.

Snuffer concluded by saying orientations with county administrators regarding OMHSAS would be coming up.

OFFICE OF DEVELOPMENTAL PROGRAMS (ODP) UPDATE

Kristin Ahrens, deputy secretary of ODP, began by discussing updates to the three waiver amendments for the Intellectual Disability Autism waivers submitted to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS). She noted that the waivers have been approved by CMS and had some technical corrections and adjusting of dates based upon "operational needs." She remarked that the waivers added a community support service component that can now be completed remotely. Ahrens noted that the remote aspect supports ODP's initiative to increase tech services, allowing people to be more independent and less reliant on staffing support. Ahrens commented that the second "big" change with the waivers is for the Person/Family Directed Support (PFDS) waiver, where there is no waiting list initiative for high school graduates.



She said that ODP also made adjustments to allow people to be enrolled in employment services without requiring recipients to go through the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) and asserted that these changes are retroactive to July 1, 2019. Ahrens stated that the Adult Autism Waiver was published for comment on September 7, noting that some of the adjustments will be technical and also include the addition of non-medical transportation services to begin in January 2020. She explained that another change with the waivers is that starting January 1, 2020, DHS will start using an assessment tool for the intellectual disabilities waivers, but will still honor the waiting list for those currently on it.

Ahrens explained that DHS announced the closure of Polk and White Haven State Centers on August 14. She noted that Polk has 194 residents and 744 employees, while White Haven has 111 residents and 429 employees. She said, “State center closures have always been very controversial and very polarizing.” Ahrens commented that DHS has a significant transition plan in place, with a 36-month closure timeline. She said that by statute, DHS is required to hold a hearing to gather feedback on the transition.

Ahrens remarked that transcripts for the hearing should be publicly available. She noted that the average stay for a resident at a state center is 44 years and acknowledged that there are people who have lived in the state centers since they were infants. Ahrens explained that residents will be apprised of services and options available in the community and noted that “no one would be moving” unless DHS can ensure their physical and mental health. She commented that if people do not want to move to a community setting after reviewing their options, they will be able to move to one of the two remaining state centers.

Ahrens explained that DHS began family meetings the week after the closure process and noted that the residents and families will have the opportunity to meet with community providers starting in December. She indicated that DHS has transition teams assigned to each center and noted that the teams are made up of representatives involved in the closure of the Hamburg State Center in 2017. She explained that there is a transition protocol that is “very intensive” and designed specifically for transitioning people out of state centers. Ahrens asserted that state center staff will monitor former residents through a wellness check for up to a year after the transition.

Miller-Wilson asked what percentage of the population at state centers is Medicaid only. Ahrens opined that it would match the general population and be between 30 and 40 percent.

Miller-Wilson noted that approximately 30 percent of Medicaid-only residents would be transitioning into HealthChoices plans but would not be going into CHC because their primary diagnosis is intellectual disability (ID). Ahrens opined that people will not be going into CHC because “the vast majority of people in the state centers have a high level of acuity” and would likely go to residential services.

Miller-Wilson noted that his organization will be asking questions about the responsibilities of MCOs and how they are involved in case management for the “very fragile population.” Ahrens noted that DHS has not looked at the data with regards to those from Hamburg who are now in the community.

Miller-Wilson also asked what medical case management looks like on a fee-for-service model and opined that he would like to have a better understanding of medical case management. He asked if the supports coordinators will be involved in medical case management on the fee-for-service side. Ahrens replied that those are the right questions to ask.

An audience member asked what is driving the center closures. Ahrens responded by noting that Gov. Wolf has been very supportive of serving more people in the community and noted that Polk and White Haven were evaluated by using factors such as the age of the infrastructures, costs per person, resident needs, and census.

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

Consumer Subcommittee:

Miller-Wilson remarked that the committee received an OMAP budget update as well as a value-based purchasing update from Laurie Rock, director, Bureau of Managed Care Operations, DHS, on how that “has been realized over the last four



years.” He noted that Dr. Douglas Jacobs, special advisor to the secretary of DHS, made a presentation. Miller-Wilson commented that the committee also received an update regarding CHC.

With respect to the PDL, Miller-Wilson reasserted the subcommittee’s support of the work DHS is doing with the PDL while expressing concerns about the consumer impact. He explained that the committee is concerned about the timing and substance of the November 1 communications. He noted that the communications should “explicitly” tell recipients to contact their physicians with questions. Miller-Wilson asserted that the committee is “eager” to make sure that the notices are sent and that MCOs reach out to members regarding changes.

Miller-Wilson stated that the committee is likely to be having a listening session on October 23 in Philadelphia about CHC and noted that there have been previous listening sessions in Johnstown and Allegheny. He remarked that the committee has secured a preliminary commitment from Hancock to speak. Miller-Wilson asserted that the committee is interested in hearing from “consumers and caretakers about their experiences with CHC” and noted that the morning listening session will be followed by a business meeting in the afternoon.

Fee-For-Service Delivery System Subcommittee:

Shoemaker explained that the committee talked about the Office of Inspector General (OIG) report released in July 2019. She noted that the committee also discussed the end of General Assistance (GA), effective August 1, as well as proposed legislation regarding GA. Shoemaker remarked that the committee reviewed the hospital closure, state PDLs, and the DHS accounts receivable project. She noted that the committee held discussions about dental fee changes published in recent bulletins.

Shoemaker stated that the committee reviewed enrollment in all service locations and 100-day processing times for hospital claims. She noted that the Fee-For-Service Delivery System Subcommittee will meet at 10:00 a.m. on November 13 at the Commonwealth Towers, Harrisburg.

Long-Term Services and Supports Subcommittee:

Cubit explained that the committee received an update on CHC and OBRA waiver renewals, which were open for a 30-day public comment period with “minor changes proposed for both.” She noted that CHC waiver renewals are proceeding quickly, so they will have an effective date of January 1, 2020, with “more comprehensive amendment changes” anticipated for a January 1, 2021, effective date.

Cubit remarked that the Pennsylvania Department of Military and Veterans Affairs (DMVA) made a presentation about workgroups that are meeting to provide a final report to the governor at the end of December. She noted that the committee discussed the Home and Community-Based Settings final rule, which had a draft heightened scrutiny bulletin open for public comment in July. Cubit said, “As a result of the comments received, OLTL plans to develop stronger language related to on-site reviews and add language to help stakeholders when they submit a setting for heightened scrutiny.”

Cubit stated that the committee discussed compliance within health care settings at private residences and noted that corrective action plans were issued based on some of the comments received. She remarked that the committee received an update on the independent enrollment broker process referenced by Hancock. She asserted that when the request for application (RFA) is released, bidders will have 45 days to respond.

Cubit noted that the committee discussed the DHS reorganization as previously referenced by Hancock, enrollment data updates, and the functional eligibility determination tool. She said that the committee also discussed medical reviews and remarked that the medical reviews are “evenly distributed across the state.”

Cubit explained that the tools have been updated to include a question about veteran status and to include more than the current three gender options. She said that the Long-Term Services and Supports Subcommittee will meet at 1:00 p.m. on October 1 at the Rachel Carson State Office Building, Harrisburg.



Managed Care Delivery System Subcommittee:

Due to the absence of Joe Glinka, Gateway Health, no subcommittee report was presented. The next meeting of the Managed Care Delivery System Subcommittee will be held on October 10 at Commonwealth Towers, Harrisburg.

Managed Long-Term Services and Supports Subcommittee:

Linda Litton, vice chair, Managed Long-Term Services and Supports, remarked that the committee held meetings on August 9 and September 5. She noted that the August 9 meeting covered mailings that were previously discussed by Hancock during today's meeting, as well as a presentation on home modifications. Litton commented that the committee also discussed MCOs' views on purchasing versus renting for certain equipment and noted that the MCOs are meeting every other month to discuss home modifications.

Litton said that there was a committee presentation about electronic verification, due to start January 1, 2020, and homecare services, which will start on January 1, 2023. She noted that there was also discussion about OLTL waiver services included in the open vendor module.

In summation of the September 5 meeting, Litton noted that the committee discussed participant outreach activities and provider workshops as previously referenced by Hancock. She commented that the committee received a presentation about electronic visits, the open vendor model, and pharmacy services. Litton remarked that the committee also discussed the current drug formularies, the statewide PDL, and prior authorization guidelines. She said that Cathers answered questions regarding pharmacy services. Litton stated that the subcommittee will meet at 10 a.m. on October 2 at 333 Market Street, Harrisburg.

Pharmacy Documents:

Buchenauer said 20 pharmacy documents were published on September 24. She noted that comments on those documents are due by October 11. Buchenauer added that since the July meeting, 46 MA bulletins were released, with a majority of them related to pharmacy and prior authorization guidelines.

Click [here](#) to view pharmacy documents and additional materials from the meeting.

<http://www.dhs.pa.gov/communitypartners/informationforadvocatesandstakeholders/medicalassistanceadvisorycommitteemaac/>

Common terms-

Area Agency on Aging (AAA)
Behavioral Health Managed Care Organization (BHMCO)
Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS)
Centers of Excellence (COE)
Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic (CCBHC)
Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP)
Community Health Choices (CHC)
Community Hospital Integration Projects Program (CHIPP)
Dual-Eligible Special Needs Plans (D-SNP)
Fee-for-service (FFS)
HealthChoices
Managed Care Organization (MCO)
Living Independence for the Elderly (LIFE)
Long-term services and supports (LTSS)
Managed care delivery system (MCDS)
Managed long-term services and supports (MLTSS)
Medical Assistance (MA)
Office of Developmental Programs (ODP)



Office of Long-Term Living (OLTL)
Office of Medical Assistance Programs (OMAP)
Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (OMHSAS)
Person/Family Directed Support Waiver (P/FDS)

Bullet.in.Points

[DOH: SPECIAL PHARMACEUTICAL BENEFITS PROGRAM ADVISORY COUNCIL PUBLIC MEETING](#)

The Department of Health's Statewide Special Pharmaceutical Benefits Program will hold a public meeting on Thursday, October 24, 2019 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., at the Radisson Hotel Harrisburg, 1150 Camp Hill Bypass, Camp Hill. For additional information, , contact John Haines, Special Pharmaceutical Benefits Program, Bureau of Communicable Diseases, Department of Health, Room 611, Health and Welfare Building, Harrisburg, 17120, (800) 922-9384.

[DOH: SPECIAL SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION PROGRAM FOR WOMEN, INFANTS AND CHILDREN \(WIC\); 2019-2020 WIC FOOD LIST](#)

The Department of Health's WIC program publishes notice of the 2019-2020 WIC food list, effective October 1, 2019. Additional information can be found on the *Pennsylvania Bulletin*.

[DOH: SPECIAL SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION PROGRAM FOR WOMEN, INFANTS AND CHILDREN \(WIC\); MAXIMUM ALLOWABLE PRICES AND COMPETITIVE PRICES](#)

The Department of Health's WIC program publishes notice of the maximum allowable prices and competitive prices for type 1 stores in regular cost counties. Additional information can be found on the *Pennsylvania Bulletin*.

[DOH: SPECIAL SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION PROGRAM FOR WOMEN, INFANTS AND CHILDREN \(WIC\); MINIMUM INVENTORY REQUIREMENTS](#)

The Department of Health's WIC program publishes notice of the minimum inventory requirements, effective October 1, 2019. Additional information can be found on the *Pennsylvania Bulletin*.

[DOH: SPECIAL SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION PROGRAM FOR WOMEN, INFANTS AND CHILDREN \(WIC\); MINIMUM TECHNOLOGY STANDARDS](#)

The Department of Health's WIC program publishes notice of minimum technology standards for a WIC authorized stores. Additional information can be found on the *Pennsylvania Bulletin*.

Cosponsor Memos

HCO 358	Frankel, Dan(D)	Adopts the prohibition on annual and lifetime health insurance coverage limits into state law.
HCO2167	McNeill, Jeanne(D)	Sets a mandatory price cap on the monthly cost of insulin for patients at \$100 a month.
HCO2283	Delloso, David (F)(D)	Makes it a crime to fail to notify certain organizations about a death or the discovery of a body.
HCO2328	Murt, Thomas(R)	Amends the Tax Reform Code to add and define child with a disability and to eliminate the inheritance tax that is applied when assets are transferred from a deceased parent to a disabled child.
HCO2329	Murt, Thomas(R)	Requires the licensing boards under Department of State's Bureau of Professional and Occupational Affairs (BPOA) to give credit to licensees for completing the Mental Health First Aid USA training program.



HCO2339	Lewis, Andrew (F)(R)	Provides a tax credit for any person or business that pays for long-term care insurance equal to 30 percent of long-term care insurance expenses.
HCO2406	Gillespie, Keith(R)	Adds "health care practitioners" to a protected class in the event of assault. This bill will raise the penalty for an assault on a health care practitioner, from a second degree misdemeanor to a second degree felony.
HCO2407	Gillespie, Keith(R)	Removes the requirement for surnames to be displayed on health care employees' identification badges.
HCO2443	Howard, Kristine (F)(D)	Requires insurance companies to cover EpiPen injections for children with allergies.
HCO2523	Brooks, Robert (F)(R)	Allows for the expungement of criminal records for those who turned to the use of marijuana for medical purposes before the enactment of the Medical Marijuana Act.
HCO2541	Daley, Mary Jo(D)	Expands restrictions on shackling for incarcerated women who are pregnant, who are in labor, or who have recently given birth.
HCO2573	Ryan, Frank(R)	Establishes requirements for the final disposition of the remains of unborn children after their demise.
HCO2596	Kosierowski, Bridget (F)(D)	Creates an efficient, expedited process for duly qualified nurses in Pennsylvania to receive a multistate license and provide care here or in any other 34 member-states in the NLC.
HCO2600	Owlett, Clint(R)	Amends the Emergency Medical Services provisions under Title 35 by providing an exemption to the staffing requirements on a BLS ambulance for the 6th through 8th class counties.
HCO2618	Murt, Thomas(R)	Administers the regulatory oversight of teledentistry by the respective professional licensure boards and establishes insurance coverage for these services.
HCO2620	McCarter, Steve(D)	Provides for a study on importing prescription drugs from Canada and designs for potential importation programs.
HCO2630	Isaacson, Mary (F)(D)	Addresses penalties for doctors who purposefully use their own sperm to inseminate a patient without that patient's knowledge or consent.
HCO2631	Jozwiak, Barry(R)	Exempts specific cardiac testing from the notification requirements of the Patient Test Result Information Act.
HCO2634	Mullery, Gerald(D)	Addresses the closing of White Haven and Polk State Centers.
HCO2642	Isaacson, Mary (F)(D)	Provides pregnant and lactating students with reasonable accommodations to express breast milk or breastfeed their children without a penalty for missing class.
SCO 238	Mensch, Bob(R)	Extends mandated insurance coverage to ultrasound screening and magnetic resonance imaging for heterogeneous or dense breast tissue.
SCO 851	Tartaglione, Christine(D)	Creates the Office for People with Disabilities.



Bill Actions

HB 117 **Miller, Daniel(D)** (PN 112) Amends the Pennsylvania Construction Code Act, in uniform construction code, providing for changing stations in places of public accommodation. An individual, corporation, partnership, company, organization, association or other business entity that owns or manages a place of public accommodation shall install and maintain at least one adult changing station for persons with disabilities or special health care issues or the elderly. Each changing station shall be accessible to both men and women when the place of public accommodation is open to the public and certain conditions are met. Effective immediately.

Bill History: 01-22-19 H Filed
01-28-19 H Introduced and referred to committee on House Labor and Industry
09-23-19 H Press conference held

HB 165 **Donatucci, Maria(D)** (PN 139) Amends Title 18 of the Pennsylvania Consolidated Statutes, in firearms and other dangerous articles, further providing for definitions, for sale or transfer of firearms and for Pennsylvania State Police and providing for self-exclusion from purchasing a firearm. The bill establishes that the Pennsylvania State Police shall establish and maintain a list of persons self-excluded from purchasing a firearm or receiving a firearm by transfer. Effective in 60 days.

Bill History: 09-24-19 H Meeting set for 9:00 a.m., Room 60, East Wing, House Judiciary -- House Judiciary
09-24-19 H Reported as committed from House Judiciary
09-24-19 H First consideration
09-24-19 H Laid on the table
10-21-19 H Set on the Tabled Calendar

HB 419 **Donatucci, Maria(D)** (PN 408) Amends the Pennsylvania Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Screening Act stipulating that eligibility for the Pennsylvania Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Screening Program is women age 30 to 65 (changed from 40 to 49) Effective in 60 days.

Bill History: 09-23-19 H Voted favorably from committee on House Health
09-23-19 H Reported as committed from House Health
09-23-19 H First consideration
09-23-19 H Laid on the table
10-21-19 H Set on the Tabled Calendar



HB 432 Barrar, Stephen(R) (PN 419) Amends the Workers' Compensation Act further providing for compensation for post-traumatic stress injury. The bill adds that "occupational disease" includes post-traumatic stress injury, which is suffered by a police officer, firefighter or emergency medical services provider and caused by exposure to a traumatic event arising in the course of the provider's employment or, after four years or more of service, is caused by and related to the cumulative effect of psychological stress in the course of the provider's employment for the benefit and safety of the public. Effective in 60 days.

Bill History: 09-24-19 H Meeting set for 10:00 a.m., Room 205, Ryan Office Building, House Veterans Affairs & Emergency Prepared. -- House Veterans Affairs & Emergency Prepared.
09-24-19 H Reported as amended House Veterans Affairs & Emergency Prepared.
09-24-19 H First consideration
09-24-19 H Laid on the table
10-21-19 H Set on the Tabled Calendar

HB 470 Frankel, Dan(D) (PN 455) Amends the Insurance Company Law adding a new section providing a health insurance offered, issued, or renewed in Pennsylvania shall not establish a lifetime limit or annual limit of the dollar amount on essential health benefits for an individual. Provides a definition of "essential health benefits." Effective in 30 days.

Bill History: 02-08-19 H Filed
02-11-19 H Introduced and referred to committee on House Insurance
09-25-19 S Set on the Senate Calendar

HB 775 Diamond, Russ(R) (PN 848) Amends the State Lottery Law, in pharmaceutical assistance for the elderly, adding language requiring the Department of Human Services to establish a method to be used at least once each calendar month to cross-reference the department's roster of claimants with the death records information from the Department of Health. Further provides a claimant who is found to have a death record shall be subject to an immediate cancellation of benefits. Effective in 60 days.

Bill History: 09-23-19 S Meeting set for 12:30 p.m., Room 8E-A, East Wing, Senate Aging and Youth -- Senate Aging and Youth
09-23-19 S Voted favorably from committee on Senate Aging and Youth
09-23-19 S Reported as committed from Senate Aging and Youth
09-23-19 S First consideration
10-21-19 S Set on the Senate Calendar



HB 1189 Knowles, Jerry(R) (PN 1386) Amends Title 35 (Health and Safety), in volunteer firefighters, repealing employment sanctions and providing for the Volunteer Emergency Responders Employer Tax Credit. Effective in 60 days.

Bill History: 04-10-19 H Filed
04-11-19 H Introduced and referred to committee on House Finance
09-24-19 H Meeting set for 9:30 a.m., Room 205, Ryan Office Building, House Finance -- House Finance
09-19-19 H Meeting cancelled for 09/24/19, House Finance -- House Finance

HB 1448 Sturla, Mike(D) (PN 1796) Amends Title 35 (Health and Safety), in volunteer fire company, ambulance service and rescue squad assistance, providing for a referendum to expand loan assistance. The referendum shall read: Do you favor expanding the use of the indebtedness authorized under 35 Pa.C.S. 7367 (relating to authority to borrow) and 7378.1 (relating to referendum for additional indebtedness) for the volunteer loan assistance under 35 Pa.C.S. Ch. 73 Subch. E (relating to volunteer fire company, ambulance service and rescue squad assistance) to include loans to fire companies that provide services through paid personnel for the purpose of establishing and modernizing facilities to house firefighting apparatus equipment, ambulances and rescue vehicles, protective and communications equipment and any other accessory equipment necessary for the proper performance of such organizations' duties? The referendum shall not be constructed as authorizing any additional borrowing for loan assistance to fire companies. Effective in 60 days.

Bill History: 09-24-19 H Meeting set for 10:00 a.m., Room 205, Ryan Office Building, House Veterans Affairs & Emergency Prepared. -- House Veterans Affairs & Emergency Prepared.
09-24-19 H Reported as committed from House Veterans Affairs & Emergency Prepared.
09-24-19 H First consideration
09-24-19 H Laid on the table
10-21-19 H Set on the Tabled Calendar



HB 1459 Schlossberg, Mike(D) (PN 1826) Amends Titles 35 (Health and Safety) and 75 (Vehicles), in Title 35, adding a chapter providing for emergency responder mental wellness and stress management; establishing the Statewide Critical Incident Stress Management Program; providing for duties of the Secretary of Health and the Department of Health; in emergency medical services system, further providing for support of emergency medical services; in operation of vehicles general provisions, further providing for EMS costs; and, in driving after imbibing alcohol or utilizing drugs, further providing for Accelerated Rehabilitative Disposition. Effective in 60 days.

Bill History: 09-24-19 H Meeting set for 10:00 a.m., Room 205, Ryan Office Building, House Veterans Affairs & Emergency Prepared. -- House Veterans Affairs & Emergency Prepared.
09-24-19 H Reported as amended House Veterans Affairs & Emergency Prepared.
09-24-19 H First consideration
09-24-19 H Laid on the table
10-21-19 H Set on the Tabled Calendar

HB 1662 DiGirolamo, Gene(R) (PN 2207) Amends the Methadone Death and Incident Review Act, incorporating Buprenorphine-related deaths into the act, including in the title, short title, definitions, the Methadone Death and Incident Review Team, team duties, review procedures and confidentiality. The legislation also removes the term narcotic treatment and replaces it with opioids-assisted treatment throughout the act. Effective in 60 days.

Bill History: 09-23-19 H Set on the House Calendar
09-23-19 H Reported as committed from House Appropriations
09-23-19 Laid out for discussion 2:58pm
09-23-19 Third consideration 2:58pm
09-23-19 H Final Passage (Vote: Y:199/N: 0)

HB 1705 Gabler, Matt(R) (PN 2297) Amends Title 35 (Health & Safety), in incentives for municipal volunteers of fire companies and nonprofit emergency medical services (EMS) agencies, expanding the definition of governing body to include the governing body of a school district, authorizing school districts to enact a tax credit against the property tax liability of active volunteers of a fire or EMS company, and increasing the current property tax credit allowance from 20 percent of an active volunteer's liability to 100 percent of their tax liability. Effective in 60 days.

Bill History: 09-18-19 H First consideration
09-18-19 H Laid on the table
09-25-19 H Set on the Tabled Calendar
09-25-19 H Removed from the table
10-21-19 H Set on the House Calendar



HB 1786 **Sainato, Chris(D)** (PN 2376) Amends Title 35 (Health & Safety), in incentives for municipal volunteers of fire companies and nonprofit emergency medical services agencies, establishing the First Responder Loan Forgiveness Program to provide up to \$16,000 in debt forgiveness for individuals who serve in eligible positions for four years. Effective in 60 days.

Bill History: 09-18-19 H First consideration
09-18-19 H Laid on the table
09-25-19 H Set on the Tabled Calendar
09-25-19 H Removed from the table
10-21-19 H Set on the House Calendar

HB 1816 **Culver, Lynda(R)** (PN 2473) Amends Title 35 (Health and Safety) increasing loan limits of the Volunteer Loan Assistance Program (VLAP) and establishing annual inflation adjustments of loan limits based on the Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers in the Northeast Region. Effective in 60 days.

Bill History: 09-24-19 H Meeting set for 10:00 a.m., Room 205, Ryan Office Building, House Veterans Affairs & Emergency Prepared. -- House Veterans Affairs & Emergency Prepared.
09-24-19 H Reported as committed from House Veterans Affairs & Emergency Prepared.
09-24-19 H First consideration
09-24-19 H Laid on the table
10-21-19 H Set on the Tabled Calendar

HB 1843 **Howard, Kristine (F)(D)** (PN 2550) Amends the Insurance Company Law, in casualty insurance, requiring coverage for epinephrine auto-injectors for individuals under 19 years of age. Effective in 90 days.

Bill History: 09-19-19 H Filed
09-23-19 H Introduced and referred to committee on House Insurance

HB 1848 **Lewis, Andrew (F)(R)** (PN 2555) Amends the Tax Reform Code providing for a long-term care insurance tax credit. Sets a limit of \$20 million in any fiscal year for tax credits. Lays out application guidelines and process. Effective in 60 days.

Bill History: 09-19-19 H Filed
09-23-19 H Introduced and referred to committee on House Finance



HB 1869 Owlett, Clint(R) (PN 2566) Amends Title 35 (Health and Safety), in emergency medical services system, providing that staffing requirements for basic life support ambulances may be waived or adjusted for counties of the sixth, seventh and eighth classes. Effective in 60 days.

Bill History: 09-24-19 H Meeting set for 10:00 a.m., Room 205, Ryan Office Building, House Veterans Affairs & Emergency Prepared. -- House Veterans Affairs & Emergency Prepared.
09-24-19 H Reported as committed from House Veterans Affairs & Emergency Prepared.
09-24-19 H First consideration
09-24-19 H Laid on the table
10-21-19 H Set on the Tabled Calendar

HB 1873 McNeill, Jeanne(D) (PN 2592) Act amending the Insurance Company Law, in casualty insurance, providing that a health insurance policy providing prescription coverage of insulin may not impose on a covered individual a copayment, coinsurance or deductible of more than \$100 per 30-day supply of insulin, regardless of the amount or type of insulin needed to fill the covered individual's prescription. Provides for excepted policies and lays out responsibilities of the attorney general. Effective in 60 days.

Bill History: 09-23-19 H Filed
09-25-19 H Introduced and referred to committee on House Insurance

HB 1876 Daley, Mary Jo(D) (PN 2595) Amends Title 61 (Prisons & Parole) laying out guidelines relating to the application of restraints to a prisoner or detainee who is known to be pregnant, laboring or postpartum during any stage of pregnancy, with exceptions. Provides that each custodian who applies restraints to a pregnant, laboring or postpartum prisoner or detainee shall, on a form prepared by the department, submit a written report of the application of restraints to a staff person appointed by the officer in charge of a correctional institution within two days of use of the restraint on a pregnant, laboring or postpartum prisoner or detainee. The staff person shall deliver each written report of the use of restraints to the officer in charge within two days of receiving the report. Lays out details required to be on the report, and the manner in which the reports must be delivered. Lays out duties for correctional institutions, including annual training on statutory requirements. Effective in 60 days.

Bill History: 09-24-19 H Filed
09-25-19 H Introduced and referred to committee on House Judiciary

HB 1879 Gillespie, Keith(R) (PN 2600) Amends Title 18 (Crimes & Offenses), in assault, further providing for the offense of aggravated assault by including a health care practitioner or technician as enumerated persons. Effective in 60 days.

Bill History: 09-24-19 H Filed
09-25-19 H Introduced and referred to committee on House Judiciary



HB 1880 Gillespie, Keith(R) (PN 2615) Amends the Health Care Facilities Act removing the requirement for surnames to be displayed on health care employees' identification badges. Provides a notation, marker or indicator included on an identification badge that differentiates employees with the same first name shall, as determined by the facility, be considered acceptable in lieu of displaying an employee's last name. Effective in 60 days.

Bill History: 09-24-19 H Filed
09-26-19 H Introduced and referred to committee on House Health

HB 1883 Murt, Thomas(R) (PN 2618) The Mental Health First Aid Training Act provides for continuing education credit for training related to mental health issues. A licensing board or licensing commission that requires a licensee to complete continuing education credits for license renewal shall provide credit toward its continuing education requirement for completion of Mental Health First Aid USA. The licensing board or licensing commission shall establish by regulation the amount of credits allocated toward the continuing education requirement for completion of the course. Effective immediately.

Bill History: 09-24-19 H Filed
09-26-19 H Introduced and referred to committee on House Human Services

HB 1884 Murt, Thomas(R) (PN 2619) Amends the Tax Reform Code, in inheritance tax, further providing for definitions and providing that the inheritance tax upon the transfer of property and other assets either directly to an individual with a disability or to a trust for the benefit of an individual with a disability from a natural parent, an adoptive parent or a stepparent of the individual shall be at the rate of zero percent. Effective in 60 days.

Bill History: 09-24-19 H Filed
09-26-19 H Introduced and referred to committee on House Finance

HB 1888 Kosierowski, Bridget (F)(D) (PN 2621) The Nurse Licensure Compact Act authorizes the commonwealth to join the Nurse Licensure Compact with other states and provides for the uniform requirements of the compact, including general provisions and jurisdiction; applications for licensure; additional authorities invested in party state licensing boards; establishment of the Interstate Commission of Nurse Licensure Compact Administrators; rulemaking; and oversight, dispute resolution, and enforcement. Effective immediately.

Bill History: 09-25-19 H Filed
09-26-19 H Introduced and referred to committee on House Professional Licensure



- HB 1890 Ryan, Frank(R) (PN 2623) The Final Disposition of Fetal Remains Act provides that upon the fetal death of an unborn child, if a parent of the unborn child selects a location for the final disposition of the fetal remains other than a location that is usual and customary for a health care facility, the parent shall be responsible for the costs relating to the final disposition of the fetal remains. Provides for the duties of health care facilities; identification requirements; simultaneous cremation; and certificate of birth. Further provides a person who violates the act shall be subject to the penalties imposed under Article IX of the Vital Statistics Law of 1953. Effective in 60 days.
- Bill History:** 09-25-19 H Filed
09-26-19 H Introduced and referred to committee on House Health
- HB 1893 Boback, Karen(R) Amends the Public School Code, in safe schools, further providing for policy relating to bullying.
- Bill History:** 09-26-19 H Filed
- HB 1895 Rowe, David(R) Amends the Mental Health Procedures Act, in general provisions, further providing for the rights and remedies of persons in treatment.
- Bill History:** 09-26-19 H Filed
- HB 1900 Mehaffie, Thomas(R) Act providing for the licensure of behavior analysts and assistant behavioral analysts; establishing Behavior Analyst Licensing Board & providing for its membership, powers & duties; establishing the Behavioral Analyst License Fund
- Bill History:** 09-26-19 H Filed
- HR 514 Murt, Thomas(R) (PN 2538) Resolution directing the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee to study the financial and administrative effectiveness of the statutory provisions requiring autism spectrum disorders insurance coverage.
- Bill History:** 09-19-19 H Filed
09-23-19 H Introduced and referred to committee on House Insurance
- HR 515 Murt, Thomas(R) (PN 2539) Resolution directing the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee to conduct a comprehensive study of changes in access to county-managed community health services between fiscal years 2010 through 2018; and establishing an advisory committee.
- Bill History:** 09-19-19 H Filed
09-23-19 H Introduced and referred to committee on House Human Services
- HR 534 Harrell, Movita (F)(D) (PN 2611) Resolution directed by Joint State Government Commission to establish an advisory committee to study gun violence as a public health crisis and issue a report of findings and recommendation to the House of Representatives.
- Bill History:** 09-25-19 H Filed
09-26-19 H Introduced and referred to committee on House Judiciary



SB 67 Ward, Judy (F)(R) (PN 60) The Psychology Interjurisdictional Compact Act authorizes the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania to join the Psychology Interjurisdictional Compact; provides for the form of the compact; and imposes additional powers and duties on the governor, the Secretary of the Commonwealth and the compact. Effective in 60 days.

Bill History: 06-19-19 S Reported as committed from Senate Consumer Protection & Prof. Licensure
06-19-19 S First consideration
09-23-19 S Set on the Senate Calendar
09-23-19 Second consideration 4:19pm
09-23-19 S Rereferred to Senate Appropriations

SB 74 Martin, Scott(R) (PN 339) Amends the Tax Reform Code adding a new article establishing a tax credit to be granted to a business firm that meets the requirements of the legislation for the purpose of funding pediatric cancer research in Pennsylvania. Requires contributions received by a pediatric cancer research center from a business firm to be used exclusively for pediatric cancer research. Provides for availability of tax credits and for the duties of the Department of Revenue. Further provides the total aggregate amount of all tax credits approved shall not exceed \$10 million in a fiscal year. Also provides a tax credit may not be approved in excess of \$2.5 million in a fiscal year for contributions to any one pediatric cancer research center. This new article shall apply to taxable years beginning after December 31, 2019. Effective in 60 days.

Bill History: 03-04-19 S Filed
03-04-19 S Introduced and referred to committee on Senate Finance
09-25-19 S Hearing set for 9:45 a.m., Room 8E-A, East Wing, Senate Finance -- Senate Finance
09-25-19 S Public hearing held in committee Senate Finance

SB 314 Baker, Lisa(R) (PN 292) The Pennsylvania Rural Health Redesign Center Authority Act establishes the Pennsylvania Rural Health Redesign Center Authority and the Pennsylvania Rural Health Redesign Center Fund. Effective in 180 days.

Bill History: 09-23-19 H Voted favorably from committee on House Health
09-23-19 H Reported as committed from House Health
09-23-19 H First consideration
09-23-19 H Laid on the table
10-21-19 H Set on the Tabled Calendar

SB 351 Ward, Judy (F)(R) (PN 341) Amends Title 18 (Crimes and Offenses), in assault, further providing for the offense of aggravated assault by adding all health care practitioners as a protected class. Effective in 60 days.

Bill History: 06-27-19 S Laid on the table
06-27-19 S Removed from the table
09-25-19 S Set on the Senate Calendar
09-25-19 Second consideration 12:06pm
10-21-19 S Set on the Senate Calendar



SB 439 **Regan, Mike(R)** (PN 427) Amends the Enforcement Office Disability Benefits Law further providing for disability benefits and for definitions. The following are added to the scope of the law: probation officers employed by a participating county; campus police officers employed by a participating university; commissioned police officers employed by the Department of Corrections, Bureau of Investigations and Intelligence; DCNR rangers, DCNR ranger supervisors, DCNR ranger operations specialists and DCNR ranger trainees employed by the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources; members of the Fort Indiantown Gap Police; investigative staff of the Office of Inspector General; members of the Allegheny County Port Authority Police; members of the Allegheny County Housing Authority Police; and corrections officers or jail guards employed by a participating county and whose principal duty is the care, custody and control of inmates. Effective in 60 days. (Prior Printer Number: 417)

Bill History: 09-23-19 S Reported as committed from Senate Appropriations
09-25-19 S Set on the Senate Calendar
09-25-19 Laid out for discussion 11:29am
09-25-19 Third consideration 11:29am
09-25-19 S Final Passage (Vote: Y: 49/N: 0)

SB 569 **Langerholc, Wayne(R)** (PN 861) Amends the Controlled Substance, Drug, Device and Cosmetic Act providing that fentanyl and fentanyl derivatives shall only be dispensed: (1) to a patient who is being treated on an in-patient basis or remains in observation status, or during a surgery that takes place in a health care facility; (2) for use in palliative or hospice care; (3) for use in the management of pain associated with cancer; (4) for use in the management of chronic pain not associated with cancer; or (5) to a patient whose treatment is associated with a medical emergency as documented in the individual's medical record. Allows for transdermal patches in a single unit of five to be dispensed for an acute medical condition. Effective in 60 days. (Prior Printer Number: 631)

Bill History: 06-26-19 S Laid on the table
06-26-19 S Removed from the table
09-23-19 S Set on the Senate Calendar
09-23-19 Second consideration 4:20pm
09-23-19 S Rereferred to Senate Appropriations

SB 595 **Mensch, Bob(R)** (PN 1178) Amends the Insurance Company Law, in casualty insurance, establishing coverage for diagnostic breast imaging for all group or individual health, sickness, accident insurance policies, and providing for hospital or medical/surgical coverage for all group or individual subscriber contracts. The legislation provides for alternatives if diagnostic or supplemental magnetic resonance imaging is not possible. Effective in 60 days.

Bill History: 09-23-19 S Filed
09-23-19 S Introduced and referred to committee on Senate Banking and Insurance



SB 798 Killion, Thomas(R)

(PN 1102) Amends the Dog Law, in short title and definitions, establishing a definition for unprovoked; and in dangerous dogs, repealing and replacing provisions regarding court proceeding, certification of registration and disposition. For any person who has been attacked by one or more dogs, or a person whose domestic animal, dog or cat has been killed or injured by an unprovoked attack, the state dog warden or the local police officer may file a complaint before a magisterial district judge, charging the owner or keeper of the dog with harboring a dangerous dog. The owner or keeper of the dog shall be found guilty of a summary offense if the magisterial district judge finds beyond a reasonable doubt that the dog has inflicted severe injury on a human being unprovoked on public or private property; killed or inflicted severe injury on a domestic animal, dog or cat unprovoked while off the owner's property; has a propensity or history of attacks for killing or inflicting severe injury on a domestic animal while on the owner's property unprovoked; or has a history or propensity of attacking humans, domestic animals, dogs or cats unprovoked. The legislation also increases the registration fee for a dangerous dog certificate from \$500 to \$1,000. Effective in 60 days.

Bill History: 07-09-19 S Filed
07-09-19 S Introduced and referred to committee on Senate Agriculture and Rural Affairs
09-24-19 S Meeting set for 10:00 a.m., Room 461, Main Capitol, Senate Agriculture and Rural Affairs -- Senate Agriculture and Rural Affairs
09-24-19 S Public hearing held in committee Senate Agriculture and Rural Affairs



SB 819 Mensch, Bob(R)

(PN 1126) Amends the Older Adults Protective Services Act, extensively revising provisions on older adults protective services relating to preliminary provisions, administration, criminal history for employees, reporting suspected abuse by employees and miscellaneous provisions; and imposing penalties. The legislation repeals Chapters 1, 3, 5, 6 and 51 of the act, and replaces the statute with language which addresses the constitutionality concern of regarding offenses listed in the act which result in a lifetime employment ban without further evaluation. The legislation streamlines communication between organizations and agencies, addresses financial exploitation by permitting financial institutions to intervene in suspected financial abuse, establishes mandatory reporters for reporting elder abuse, and provides for employment practices that are safe for elder care organizations. The legislation establishes civil and criminal penalties and liabilities, Section 202-A of the act shall take effect in one year; the remainder of this act shall take effect immediately.

Bill History: 09-23-19 S Reported as committed from Senate Aging and Youth
09-23-19 S First consideration
09-24-19 S Set on the Senate Calendar
09-24-19 Second consideration 4:31pm
09-24-19 S Rereferred to Senate Appropriations

Upcoming Events

Press Conference

September 28, 2019 - 10:00 a.m., Main Capitol Steps
National Trans Visibility March - Harrisburg (unconfirmed)

Press Conference

October 1, 2019 - 11:00 a.m., Capitol Fountain, Commonwealth Avenue
Turn the State Capitol Fountain Pink with PBCC

House Republican Policy Committee

October 1, 2019 - 2:30 p.m., Sheetz Operations Support Center, 242 Sheetz Way, Claysburg
Roundtable discussion with local businesses, elected officials and economic development organizations on workforce development, unfunded mandates, health care, higher education, regulatory reform and criminal justice reform

Department of Human Services

October 2, 2019 - 10:00 a.m., Department of Education, Honors Suite, 1st Floor, 333 Market St., Harrisburg
Managed Long-Term Services & Supports Subcommittee Meeting. For additional information: (717) 772-2549

Press Conference

October 2, 2019 - 2:00 p.m., Main Capitol Rotunda, Harrisburg
Healthcare Workers Press Conference (unconfirmed)

House Democratic Policy Committee

October 2, 2019 - 2:00 p.m., Abington School District Admin. Bldg, 970 Highland Avenue, Abington
Public hearing with Rep. Ben Sanchez on autism awareness

**Department of Health**

October 2, 2019 - 4:00 p.m., Holiday Inn, 100 Pine Street, Williamsport

Title V Maternal and Child Health Services Block Grant Public Meeting. For additional information: (717) 346-3000

Senate Democratic Policy Committee

October 3, 2019 - 11:00 a.m., DCCC Academic Bldg., Room 2246, 901 S. Media Line Road, Media

Policy hearing on continuing the conversation around the future of firefighting and EMS in the Commonwealth

Department of Human Services

October 3, 2019 - 12:30 p.m., PaTTAN, 6340 Flank Drive, Harrisburg

OCDEL State Interagency Coordinating Council (SICC) Meeting. For additional information: (717) 772-2376

State Board of Psychology

October 7, 2019 - 9:00 a.m., 2601 North Third Street, Harrisburg

Board Meeting. For additional information: (717) 783-7155

House Democratic Policy Committee

October 7, 2019 - 2:00 p.m., Baldwin Borough Municipal Complex, 3344 Churchview Avenue, Pittsburgh

Public hearing with Rep. Bill Kortz on homecare in Pennsylvania

Department of Human Services

October 8, 2019 - 10:00 a.m., Rachel Carson State Office Building, Room 105, 400 Market St., Harrisburg

Long-Term Services & Supports Subcommittee Meeting. For additional information: (717) 772-2549

House Democratic Policy Committee

October 8, 2019 - 2:00 p.m., Teamsters Temple Banquet Hall, 4701 Butler Street, Pittsburgh

Public hearing with Rep. Sara Innamorato on Ending Overdose Deaths: Harm Reduction As Drug Policy

Department of Health

October 8, 2019 - 4:00 p.m., Montgomery-County Norristown Public Library, Community Room, 1001 Powell Street, Norristown

Title V Maternal and Child Health Services Block Grant Public Meeting. For additional information: (717) 346-3000

House Democratic Policy Committee

October 9, 2019 - 10:00 a.m., Propel Northside Community Wellness Center, 1805 Buena Vista Street, Pittsburgh

Public hearing with Rep. Jake Wheatley, Jr. on adverse childhood experiences

State Board of Podiatry

October 16, 2019 - 9:30 a.m., 2601 North Third Street, Harrisburg

Board Meeting. For additional information: (717) 783-4858

PA Advisory Council on Drug and Alcohol Abuse (DDAP)

October 17, 2019 - 1:00 p.m., Dept. of Drug & Alcohol Programs, One Penn Center, 5th Floor, 2601 N 3rd St., Harrisburg

Council Meeting. For additional information: (717) 214-1937

Department of Health

October 18, 2019 - 10:00 a.m., Health and Welfare Building, 625 Forster Street, Harrisburg

Renal Disease Advisory Committee Meeting. For additional information: (717) 772-2762



In the News

- 09-26-2019 **Wolf says he supports marijuana legalization following release of listening tour report**
Gov. Tom Wolf called on the General Assembly Wednesday to hold a “serious debate” on the legalization of recreational marijuana in the commonwealth, citing the results of Lieutenant Gov. John Fetterman’s statewide listening tour as evidence that the state was... - [Pennsylvania Legislative Services](#)
- 09-26-2019 **Wolf, Fetterman call for legalization of marijuana**
Citing the results of Lt. Gov. John Fetterman’s 67-county listening tour on marijuana legalization, Gov. Tom Wolf on Wednesday called on Pennsylvania lawmakers to begin working toward the decriminalization of possession of small amounts of the drug. Wolf said 44,407 Pennsylvanians weighed in on the issues either at town... - [Pittsburgh Tribune-Review](#)
- 09-26-2019 **Bullying, mental health concerns top reports to Safe2Say Something, Pennsylvania’s student tip line**
Pennsylvania schools need more resources to address the bullying and mental health issues that cause students to harm themselves and consider suicide, Attorney General Josh Shapiro said Wednesday in a discussion with high school students on the state’s new school safety app and tipline.... - [Allentown Morning Call](#)
- 09-26-2019 **Pa. Senate passes bill raising minimum age for buying tobacco and vaping products to 21**
Legislation that would raise the minimum legal age to buy tobacco and vaping products in Pennsylvania from 18 years of age to 21 passed the Pennsylvania Senate on Wednesday. The bill, approved by a 43-6 vote, now goes to the House for consideration. State Sen. Mario Scavella, R-Monroe County, who authored the so-called... - [Penn Live, Patriot-News](#)
- 09-26-2019 **Mental health issues top the list of tips logged on anonymous school safety app**
In the year since the Office of Pennsylvania Attorney General launched an anonymous school safety tip program, some 28,000 tips have been received. The vast majority of the tips were unrelated to specific threats to a school or threat of violence at an individual, instead they dealt with the... - [Penn Live, Patriot-News](#)
- 09-26-2019 **Survey: Family health insurance cost tops \$20,000 annually**
The average family premium for health insurance topped \$20,000 in 2019 for the first time, while the average employee deductible reached \$1,655, double the average of a decade ago, a new report released Wednesday found. The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation found that family health insurance... - [Pittsburgh Post-Gazette](#)
- 09-26-2019 **Assault, drug cases among recent Monroeville police investigations**
Monroeville police filed the following charges Sept. 23 in District Judge Jeffrey L. Herbst’s office: • Thomas Moeller, 60, of Pittsburgh with retail theft. Charges were filed Sept. 23 in connection with an incident along the 3600 block of William Penn Highway.... - [Pittsburgh Tribune-Review](#)
- 09-26-2019 **Pennsylvania Gov. Tom Wolf now supports legalizing marijuana**
Pennsylvania Gov. Tom Wolf is now in favor of legalizing marijuana for recreational use, saying Wednesday that most of the state’s residents support it and that the state has a wealth of knowledge from the experience in other states to guide it... - [AP](#)



- 09-26-2019 **Senate passes bill to increase age to buy tobacco or vaping products**
HARRISBURG — The age to buy tobacco and vaping products would move to 21 under legislation that passed the state Senate on Wednesday. Pennsylvania would become the 19th state to set 21 as the minimum age to buy tobacco products. Almost all of the states neighboring Pennsylvania... - [Sunbury Daily Item](#)
- 09-26-2019 **Wolf: PA is ready for legal marijuana**
HARRISBURG — Gov. Tom Wolf said he thinks Pennsylvanians are ready for the state to legalize adult recreational use of marijuana based on the responses from the public prompted by Lt. Gov. John Fetterman's statewide listening tour on the issue. "We now know the majority of Pennsylvanians are in favor of... - [New Castle News](#)
- 09-26-2019 **Mother of drug overdose victim seeks Luzerne County Council intervention**
Local registered nurse Mary Barberio Conrad showed Luzerne County Council members a photograph of her late 24-year-old son this week and said charges should have been filed against the drug dealer she believes killed him. Conrad said during the council work session that she found her son, Dean... - [Wilkes-Barre Times Leader](#)
- 09-26-2019 **As concerns about vaping grow, Centre County schools look to education, detection tools**
State College police officer John Aston sat in his office and gestured toward the two boxes in his desk filled to the brim with confiscated e-cigarettes. Each in its own separate plastic bag, the vapes, as they are also known, come in different sizes, styles and colors. He pulled out a... - [State College Centre Daily Times](#)
- 09-26-2019 **Gov. Tom Wolf: 'Majority' of Pennsylvanians favor legalizing recreational marijuana**
HARRISBURG — Gov. Tom Wolf said Wednesday that he is among the majority of Pennsylvanians who are in favor of legalizing recreational marijuana. - [Shamokin News-Item](#)
- 09-26-2019 **State Report: Majority of feedback from Northumberland County residents favor legalizing marijuana**
HARRISBURG — More than 380 of 455 Northumberland County residents who submitted feedback or commented during Lt. Governor John Fetterman's statewide recreational marijuana tour are in favor of legalization. - [Shamokin News-Item](#)
- 09-26-2019 **Top State Government Officials Call for Legalization of Recreational Marijuana**
HARRISBURG – Pennsylvania Gov. Tom Wolf and Lt. Gov. John Fetterman on Wednesday called for the state to legalize recreational marijuana. The state's top two elected officials held a joint news conference at the Capitol. Wolf, who earlier said he wanted to see results from other... - [Lock Haven Record](#)
- 09-26-2019 **'Please reach out': Suicide prevention help is available from Northampton County**
Twice, in two months in 2014, Jim Presto watched as suicide ripped his family apart. There was no clear warning either time. First, his 19-year-old son, Joshua Johnson, killed himself that February. In April, his wife Laurette Johnson-Presto lost her stepmother, Marianne... - [Easton Express-Times](#)
- 09-26-2019 **Case against Boyertown transgender facilities policy dropped**
BOYERTOWN — The case seeking to overturn the Boyertown Area School District's controversial policy for bathroom and locker room use by transgender students, and rejected by the U.S. Supreme Court, has been dropped. An email from the Independence Law Center, which was one of two legal... - [Pottstown Mercury](#)



- 09-26-2019 **[Bensalem doctor indicted in alleged drug scheme](#)**
Dr. Neil K. Anand and three co-conspirators were indicted on charges of health care fraud and conspiracy to distribute controlled substances in U.S. District Court for allegedly providing patients with bags of medications that included painkillers, sedatives, muscle relaxants and... - [Levittown Bucks County Courier Times](#)
- 09-26-2019 **[Gov. Wolf calls for legalization of adult recreational marijuana use](#)**
Gov. Tom Wolf called for the decriminalization and legalization of adult use of recreational marijuana Wednesday after concluding Pennsylvanians support his announcements. Wolf, during a live streamed news conference from Harrisburg, made the announcements after Lt. Gov. John Fetterman concluded his marijuana... - [Uniontown Herald-Standard](#)
- 09-26-2019 **[Perryopolis doctor's arrest prompts use of program to help addicted patients](#)**
Federal officials said a Fayette County case prompted the first use a program that helps patients find care or treatment if their doctor's office is closed by federal law enforcement. Dr. Emilio Navarro, 58, was indicted earlier this week on charges that he exchanged pain pills for sexual favors from a patient. Navarro, who lives... - [Uniontown Herald-Standard](#)
- 09-26-2019 **[Juul Replaces Its C.E.O. With a Tobacco Executive](#)**
The vaping powerhouse Juul Labs replaced its chief executive with a veteran of Big Tobacco on Wednesday, deepening the company's turmoil and raising doubts about the very future of the e-cigarette industry. The sudden announcement capped a relentless cascade of events that has... - [New York Times](#)
- 09-26-2019 **[Analysis | The Health 202: Trump is finalizing an executive order allowing imports of some prescription drugs](#)**
The White House says President Trump will issue an executive order within the next few weeks to strengthen certain Medicare plans and allow the United States to import some prescription drugs. The announcement is expected to come as part of a broader address on the... - [Washington Post](#)
- 09-26-2019 **[People who overdosed this week in Pittsburgh thought they were ingesting cocaine, instead took fentanyl](#)**
A second man has been indicted in relation to the rash of drug overdoses that occurred earlier this week in the Pittsburgh area. There was a total of eight overdoses, three of which were fatal. Six occurred on the South Side on Sunday morning, and two in West Mifflin early... - [WTF](#)
- 09-26-2019 **[Should Medicare cover dental, vision & hearing care? Lancaster County man talks to Senate committee](#)**
Medicare generally doesn't cover dental, vision and hearing care, and that can be a big problem for some seniors, an East Hempfield Township man told a U.S. Senate committee on Wednesday. Brian Long, 76, is familiar with the issue because of his role as Lancaster, Lebanon and Berks county coordinator for the Pennsylvania Link... - [Lancaster Intelligencer Journal](#)



- 09-26-2019 **Community Health Centers Teeter on Financial Cliff, Courtesy of Congress**
Down in the Louisiana bayou, Dr. Gary Wiltz is wondering how he's supposed to run 14 community health centers and treat 30,000 patients without a large chunk of federal money. Again. As happened in 2017, Congress is on the precipice of failing to meet the Sept. 30 deadline for reauthorizing the Community Health Center Fund that... - [Stateline.org](#)
- 09-26-2019 **County celebrates recovery**
Roger Canfield has been battling substance use disorder from a young age. It began with pills, drinking and prescribed medications that only made his dependency worse, with seven or eight years in and out of the legal system while continuing to use. "Something just clicked and I wanted something different in life,"... - [Tunkhannock The New Age Examiner](#)
- 09-26-2019 **Owlett introduces bill to attract more doctors to region**
The House Health Committee has approved legislation sponsored by Rep. Clint Owlett (R-Tioga/Bradford/Potter) that would improve the credentialing process in Pennsylvania for health care practitioners and address unwarranted delays by health insurers in credentialing applicants for... - [Wellsboro Tioga Publishing](#)
- 09-26-2019 **In first-of-its-kind move, counselors assist patients while Fayette County doctor is arrested**
Alongside local police and federal agents raiding Dr. Emilio Ramon Navarro's Fayette County office on Monday were drug and alcohol counselors helping patients find alternatives as their doctor was arrested on federal charges. It's the first time such a rapid-response team has been deployed during... - [Pittsburgh Tribune-Review](#)
- 09-26-2019 **After 18-month battle, Philly Council passes lead safety bill**
Ending an 18-month lobbying battle between landlords and child safety advocates, City Council on Thursday voted 16-0 to approve a bill aimed at ensuring children aren't exposed to lead in rental housing. .Our children continue to be poisoned by lead even though we have the tools... - [Philadelphia Inquirer](#)
- 09-26-2019 **City Council passes lead remediation for residences**
Philadelphia City Council Thursday unanimously passed a bill to allow for lead inspections in apartments and rented homes, starting next year. The bill, introduced by Councilmember Blondell Reynolds Brown (D-At Large) earlier this year, creates a staggered schedule for residences rented to... - [Pennsylvania Legislative Services](#)
- 09-25-2019 **Raccoon found in Bethel Park tests positive for rabies**
A raccoon brought to the Allegheny County Health Department has tested positive for rabies. The raccoon was spotted along Villahaven Drive in Bethel Park. This is the 21st rabid animal reported in Allegheny County in 2019, including 16 raccoons, four bats and one cat.... - [Pittsburgh Tribune-Review](#)
- 09-25-2019 **Sen. Lindsey Williams to host addiction resources open house in Brackenridge**
Narcan demonstrations, safe prescription disposal bags, recovery specialists and family counselors are among the resources that will be available from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m., Friday when state Sen. Lindsey M. Williams, D-West View, hosts a free Addiction Resource Open House at... - [Pittsburgh Tribune-Review](#)



- 09-25-2019 **Capitol hearing ‘only the beginning’ of White Haven Center debate**
HARRISBURG — A lengthy, often heated state Senate committee hearing Tuesday on plans to close the White Haven and Polk state centers represented only “the beginning of the conversation,” the Western Pennsylvania lawmaker chairing the panel vowed. “We heard today a lot about real life and real people,” said state... - [Wilkes-Barre Times Leader](#)
- 09-25-2019 **White House officials visit Fayette County to learn about drug prevention program**
The deputy director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy traveled to Fayette County to learn about a locally instituted substance abuse prevention model. Kendel Ehrlich said she wanted to know what’s been working, and how it may be applied to other parts of the country that are still struggling with... - [Uniontown Herald-Standard](#)
- 09-25-2019 **MEDICAL MARIJUANA | Pharmacists on front line of state's program**
Pharmacists play a key role in managing and distributing an appropriate dosage of medical marijuana in its various forms across Pennsylvania's 60 state-approved dispensaries. Through Pennsylvania's guidelines, patients do not receive marijuana as medicine the same way they would receive a muscle relaxer or antibiotics... - [Johnstown Tribune-Democrat](#)
- 09-25-2019 **Opinion | Child death rates are down. It's cause for optimism.**
HUMANKIND KNOWS no greater tragedy than the death of a small child. Thanks to quiet but powerful progress in public health, that tragedy is far less common than it once was . including in the planet.s developing regions. As recently as 1990, the global annual rate of death for children under the... - [Washington Post](#)
- 09-25-2019 **Analysis | The Health 202: Wiping out medical debt would be a lot harder than Bernie Sanders makes it sound**
Medical-related debt is the top reason Americans file for bankruptcy. Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) wants to erase much of that debt in his latest ambitious plan to reshape the country.s health-care system. But the way he.s proposing to dos o may be logistically unworkable . and... - [Washington Post](#)
- 09-25-2019 **Pennsylvania gets \$5M grant to study health effects of PFAS**
MONTGOMERY COUNTY , Pa. (KYW Newsradio) — Pennsylvania is getting a \$5 million grant to study health effects of chemical used in firefighting foam at the Willow Grove Naval Air Station that contaminated water supply. The chemicals are known as PFAS, and for years now, state Rep. Todd... - [KYW News Radio 1060](#)
- 09-25-2019 **Several Lancaster County school districts discovered toxic lead in their drinking water in 2018-19, test results show**
Many Lancaster County schools discovered troubling amounts of toxic lead flowing through their pipes this past school year after a new state law pushed them to test their water. Among several hundred water sources tested at the county’s public schools, 42 had lead levels beyond the action limit of 15 parts per billion... - [Lancaster Intelligencer Journal](#)
- 09-25-2019 **Pine Grove experiences water problems**
A spokeswoman for the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections has confirmed that there was a problem with the water supply — or at least with the way that water supply was tested — at the State Correctional Institution at Pine Grove over this past weekend. “On Friday, September 19, 2019, SCI-Pine Grove officials were notified... - [Indiana Gazette](#)



- 09-25-2019 **[N.J. weed vote still likely by year-end, sources say. But there are 2 options on the question.](#)**
After more than a year of delays, state lawmakers are poised to cast some type of vote in the weeks after Election Day on plans to legalize marijuana in New Jersey, NJ Advance Media has learned. But the question remains whether they will vote on a proposed law making... - [Trenton Times](#)
- 09-25-2019 **[Fertility standards: Clinics need federal oversight, regulations](#)**
Fertility clinics are big business and the stakes involved in their work are high The recent nightmare story of a New Jersey couple fighting with a fertility clinic that mistakenly used the wrong man's sperm to conceive their child is the latest such horror story to warn of the need for better... - [Pittsburgh Post-Gazette](#)
- 09-25-2019 **[Glaxo invests \\$120M in suburban Philly anti-cancer factory](#)**
GlaxoSmithKline Plc, the big U.K.-based drugmaker with roots in Philadelphia, says it will spend \$120 million upgrading its manufacturing complex in Upper Merion Township so it can speed what chief executive Emma Walmsley called "the next generation" of cancer treatments and get them... - [Philadelphia Inquirer](#)
- 09-25-2019 **[Criticism of Scott Perry on FGM, unfair | PennLive letters](#)**
I am responding to the letter to the editor by Ms. Marta Peck. As the national leader of the EndFGMToday initiative, I am compelled to respond to her criticism of Congressman Scott Perry. Having worked with Congressman Perry on the criminalization of female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C)... - [Penn Live, Patriot-News](#)
- 09-25-2019 **[Survey: Family health insurance cost tops \\$20,000 annually](#)**
The average family premium for health insurance topped \$20,000 in 2019 for the first time, while the average employee deductible reached \$1,655, double the average of a decade ago, a new report released Wednesday found. The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation found that family health insurance... - [Pittsburgh Post-Gazette](#)
- 09-25-2019 **[Is this why your medicine costs so much? | PennLive Editorial](#)**
Many independent pharmacies in Pennsylvania are not happy, and for good reason. We shouldn't be, either. They complain of being at the mercy of a system that mandates a middleman conglomerate to negotiate the cost of the drugs they purchase and then sell to us. They say that system artificially drives up the cost of drugs,... - [Penn Live, Patriot-News](#)
- 09-25-2019 **[Pa. Senate passes bill raising minimum age for buying tobacco and vaping products to 21](#)**
Legislation that would raise the minimum legal age to buy tobacco and vaping products in Pennsylvania from 18 years of age to 21 passed the Pennsylvania Senate on Wednesday. The bill, approved by a 43-6 vote, now goes to the House for consideration. State Sen. Mario Scavella, R-Monroe County, who authored the so-called... - [Penn Live, Patriot-News](#)
- 09-25-2019 **[Mental health issues top the list of tips logged on anonymous school safety app](#)**
In the year since the Office of Pennsylvania Attorney General launched an anonymous school safety tip program, some 28,000 tips have been received. The vast majority of the tips were unrelated to specific threats to a school or threat of violence at an individual, instead they dealt with the... - [Penn Live, Patriot-News](#)



- 09-24-2019 **Legislators introduce a bill that would put adult changing tables in public buildings for people with disabilities**
Rep. Dan Miller (D-Allegheny) held a press conference where he was joined by Sen. Camera Bartolotta (R-Washington), Sen. Pam Iovino (D-Allegheny) and advocates to push for adding adult changing facilities in public buildings to help people with disabilities and their families.... - [Pennsylvania Legislative Services](#)
- 09-24-2019 **St. Christopher's doctors worry as new owners won't keep chief heart surgeon**
In a surprise move, the nonprofits buying St. Christopher's Hospital for Children are not bringing on the head of its neonatal heart surgery program that's key to maintaining the hospital's status as a trauma center. The employment contract of Achintya Moulick, the hospital's chief... - [Philadelphia Inquirer](#)
- 09-24-2019 **New Philly lead bill should be first step in housing culture change | Editorial**
On Thursday, after almost a year, Philadelphia City Council is poised to pass a bill to protect children from lead poisoning in the city's rental properties. The bill, introduced in October 2018 by Councilmember Blondell Reynolds Brown, would require all landlords renting units in... - [Philadelphia Inquirer](#)
- 09-24-2019 **Pa. Senate hearing today on White Haven, Polk closures**
WILKES-BARRE — Today's hearing before the Senate Health and Human Services Committee in Harrisburg promises to be filled with information and emotion as advocates take their case to lawmakers to try to convince the Wolf Administration to not close the White Haven and Polk state centers.... - [Wilkes-Barre Times Leader](#)
- 09-24-2019 **State, hospital investigating Legionnaires' cases in Scranton area**
The state Health Department and Regional Hospital of Scranton are probing what caused several cases of Legionnaires' disease in the city. Because Legionella bacteria grow in water pipes and can spread through shower heads, Regional is limiting water use. Hospital staff is giving... - [Scranton Times](#)
- 09-24-2019 **MEDICAL MARIJUANA | Doctors slow to embrace treatments with cannabis**
Pennsylvania physicians are taking a cautious approach when it comes to medical marijuana. Statewide, just 1,201 doctors have completed requirements for certifying patients to receive medical cannabis, the Health Department reports. That's barely 2 percent of the state's 51,089 physicians with active licenses.... - [Meadville Tribune](#)
- 09-24-2019 **MEDICAL MARIJUANA | Employers, courts wrestle with differences in state, federal laws**
Legalize medical-marijuana creates a gray area for the state's courts and employers – some of which are held to standards set by the federal government, which still considers the drug an illegal substance, experts say. Employers that deal with federal contracts, such as with the Department of... - [Johnstown Tribune-Democrat](#)
- 09-24-2019 **OJR student inspires introduction of Lilly's Bill in Pa. House**
SOUTH COVENTRY — Owen J. Roberts High School senior Lilly Minor is only 16 but she's already done something most people have never even tried. She's inspired a bill in the Pennsylvania Legislature. HB1708, also dubbed Lilly's Bill, seeks to make it mandatory... - [West Chester Daily Local News](#)



- 09-24-2019 **[Spraying begins for mosquito control](#)**
A virus capable of producing a rare and potentially fatal brain infection in humans has been identified in the Poconos. The Pennsylvania departments of health and agriculture on Saturday warned of multiple confirmed cases of Eastern Equine Encephalitis — a rare virus that can be transmitted to... - [Pocono Record](#)
- 09-24-2019 **[Craft store owner takes mold issue to commissioners](#)**
LOCK HAVEN — A local businesswoman has escalated her serious mold issue to the Clinton County commissioners. Sharon Hanley told the commissioners her craft store, which she ran out of a rented commercial building located at 50 Woodward Ave. has been plagued with mold from floor to ceiling to the point that her merchandise was... - [Lock Haven Express](#)
- 09-24-2019 **[Wolf administration bashes 'cruel' food stamp proposal](#)**
HARRISBURG — A Trump administration proposal intended to reduce fraud in the food stamp program is a "cruel and mean-spirited" move that will make it harder for 200,000 Pennsylvanians to get needed food, Pennsylvania Secretary of Human Services Teresa Miller said Monday.... - [Meadville Tribune](#)
- 09-24-2019 **[Geisinger looks to ease Valley health improvement](#)**
DANVILLE — Geisinger president and CEO Dr. Jaewon Ryu is focusing on developing programs and initiatives that make it easier for consumers to improve their health. "There's more that we can do to impact care than what happens within the four walls of the hospital," Ryu told a group of Valley business and... - [Sunbury Daily Item](#)
- 09-24-2019 **[Saint Francis nursing earns honors](#)**
The Saint Francis University nursing program was named No. 1 in the United States by [nrcarrers.org](#). The designation was awarded based on exemplary preparedness of the program's graduating nurses and first-time NCLEX-RN pass rates. Saint Francis touts a 100 percent NCLEX-RN first-time pass rate, five years... - [Altoona Mirror](#)
- 09-24-2019 **[Analysis | Biden's bungled attack on Medicare-for-all](#)**
.One of the debates I have with two of my colleagues I greatly respect, both really fine people, is Medicare-for-all. Well, that.s a great idea. But guess what, it costs, minimum, \$3.4 trillion per year. That.s twice the entire national budget, except for interest on the debt. Now tell me,... - [Washington Post](#)
- 09-24-2019 **[Analysis | The Health 202: It's vaping week on Capitol Hill](#)**
The vaping industry is under major fire in Washington since federal health officials began investigating the cause behind hundreds of vaping-related illnesses over the past month. And the industry should be readying for some big changes as both the Trump administration and lawmakers in both parties look to crack down on it.... - [Washington Post](#)
- 09-24-2019 **[After Reports Of Deadly Mosquito-Borne Virus In PA, Immunologist Says Not To Worry Too Much](#)**
A rare virus that can lead to serious neurological problems or death in humans has been found in three Pennsylvania counties. Two dead horses in Mahoning Township in Carbon County tested positive for Eastern Equine Encephalitis, or EEE. A dead pheasant in Pocono Township in... - [WESA 90.5](#)



- 09-24-2019 **[Should government regulate private drinking wells? LNP/LancasterOnline readers react \[comments\]](#)**
Lancaster County is home to approximately 38,000 of the state's nearly 1 million private wells, according to the Pennsylvania Geological Survey. LNP/LancasterOnline reported Sunday on well water testing in Lancaster County. You can read the full story by clicking here, but excerpts follow.... - [Lancaster Intelligencer Journal](#)
- 09-24-2019 **[A divided 9th Circuit could uphold Trump's new abortion referral rule](#)**
A federal appeals court appeared divided along party lines Monday on whether to uphold a new Trump administration rule that denies federal family planning money to clinics that refer patients for abortions. During a hearing in San Francisco, an 11-judge panel of the U.S. 9th... - [Los Angeles Times](#)
- 09-24-2019 **[On-Site Health Care Could Help Seniors Stay at Home](#)**
OWINGS MILLS, Md. — The “two super fantastic ladies”—as one resident calls them—at the Weinberg Villages senior housing complex are operating quasi-undercover. Sure, they serve up smiles, friendly chit-chat and treats for four-legged visitors. But while they're smiling and... - [Stateline.org](#)
- 09-24-2019 **[With feds in mind, WV Treasurer lawyers up on medical marijuana](#)**
State Treasurer John Perdue is hiring an attorney to assist with his office's handling of banking services for West Virginia's medical cannabis program, a show of escalating tension with the district's federal prosecutor. Through the Attorney General's Office, Perdue is requesting help from... - [Charleston Gazette-Mail](#)
- 09-24-2019 **[Feet to the flame: Josh Shapiro keeps up the pressure on Purdue, Sacklers](#)**
Purdue's proposed settlement does not achieve justice for the victims of the opioid crisis Pennsylvania Attorney General Josh Shapiro has bucked a settlement with Purdue Pharma and is holding the company's feet to the flames by way of a new lawsuit that directly targets its owners, the Sackler family. Local... - [Pittsburgh Post-Gazette](#)
- 09-24-2019 **[A battle over ethanol: Mandates in gasoline should not be raised](#)**
That solution would not harm area farmers or ethanol plants but would help oil refineries nationwide A quiet but intense lobbying battle in Washington between farmers and the oil refining industry can be resolved simply: The federal government should not raise the ethanol mandates in gasoline next year.... - [Pittsburgh Post-Gazette](#)
- 09-24-2019 **[After alarming headlines, when will the menace of mosquitoes die down? NOAA's fall outlook isn't good news.](#)**
As temperatures began to tick up in May and June, the heavy rains and hot, muggy weather mixed up the perfect recipe for mosquitoes to breed and bite all over the Lehigh Valley. They spilled from their hiding places and seemingly celebrated the conditions favoring their growth.... - [Allentown Morning Call](#)
- 09-24-2019 **[Paul Muschick: How poor care at a Pennsylvania VA hospital may have contributed to veteran's death](#)**
There were plenty of signs that the young veteran's life could be in danger, yet no one intervened, or even kept a close watch. That sadly happens too often. But this case is exceptionally distressing because of where it happened — in a veterans hospital. “Quality of care deficiencies” may have contributed to the... - [Allentown Morning Call](#)



- 09-24-2019 **Massachusetts temporarily banning sale of vaping products**
The governor of Massachusetts on Tuesday declared a public health emergency and ordered a four-month ban on the sale of vaping products in the state... - [AP](#)
- 09-24-2019 **Is Hahnemann a 'zombie hospital'? Appeal of residency program sale hinges on that argument**
A federal judge was skeptical of the arguments made by lawyers in favor of the sale of the hundreds of medical residency slots at bankrupt Hahnemann University Hospital. A bankruptcy judge's approval of the \$55 million sale, which federal regulators want blocked because they consider it illegal, hinged, at the... - [Philadelphia Inquirer](#)
- 09-24-2019 **3 months after devastating South Philly refinery blast, city declares incident under control**
Three months after a fire and explosion shut down the Philadelphia Energy Solutions refinery complex, the city's Fire Department on Tuesday declared the incident under control and will no longer maintain around-the-clock presence at the site. Philadelphia Fire Commissioner Adam Thiel said the city's official... - [Philadelphia Inquirer](#)
- 09-24-2019 **National PFAS health study will include Bucks, Montgomery, Gloucester County residents**
Philadelphia-area residents who were exposed to drinking water tainted by PFAS will receive in-depth medical testing as part of a national study examining the impact that the chemicals can have on human health, the federal government announced Monday. Two of the seven sites across the country awarded grant funding for health... - [Philadelphia Inquirer](#)
- 09-24-2019 **'More mosquitoes' and a 'major spike' in pest populations as warm temperatures to persist through December, experts forecast**
As temperatures began to tick up in May and June, the heavy rains and hot, muggy weather mixed up the perfect recipe for mosquitoes to breed and bite all over the Lehigh Valley. They spilled from their hiding places and seemingly celebrated the conditions favoring their population growth.... - [Allentown Morning Call](#)
- 09-24-2019 **Elderly malnutrition focus of Westmoreland awareness week**
No matter what meal Sue Floder makes for the Norwin Meals on Wheels program, she knows one thing to be true . the sweet treat goes first. .I think most of them (seniors) go for the goody first because you lose a lot of your taste buds when you're older, and sweet is the last taste bud... - [Pittsburgh Tribune-Review](#)
- 09-23-2019 **Rare, deadly virus that mosquitoes can transfer to humans detected in Carbon, Monroe counties**
A rare, potentially deadly virus transmitted by mosquitoes has been confirmed in three Pennsylvania counties, including two in the Lehigh Valley region... - [AP](#)
- 09-23-2019 **What questions do you have about the Kanzius device?**
Erie Times-News reporter David Bruce will answer your questions and share what he knows. NeoTherma Oncology, the company that owns the patent rights to John Kanzius' Noninvasive Radiowave Cancer Device, has announced that human trials on a new version of the late Millcreek Township inventor's... - [Erie Times-News](#)



- 09-23-2019 **[Lyme disease affects thousands in Pennsylvania each year](#)**
In the last three to five years, the state has seen a steady increase in the number of newly diagnosed Lyme disease cases, but 2018 broke that trend. Nate Wardle with the Pennsylvania Department of Health said the number of Lyme disease cases diagnosed in 2018 went down from previous years. In 2017... - [Uniontown Herald-Standard](#)
- 09-23-2019 **[Opioid OD hospitalizations drop statewide; rise in Fayette County](#)**
Statewide, the number of hospital admissions for opioid overdose in 2018 dropped 23.8% from the year before, according to a Pennsylvania Health Care Cost Containment Council report. While Washington, Allegheny and Westmoreland counties helped lead the charge, Fayette County did not fare well in the residential-based... - [Uniontown Herald-Standard](#)
- 09-23-2019 **[Bullskin man returning to normal life after three-year struggle with Lyme disease](#)**
Lyme disease has overwhelmed the northeastern states in America over the last several years, and here in Pennsylvania alone over 10,000 new cases were reported last year. But as local doctors and patients are learning, diagnosing the disease can be a bit of a challenge.... - [Uniontown Herald-Standard](#)
- 09-23-2019 **[Marijuana possession case in Lehigh County could alter law enforcement's approach to prosecution](#)**
For decades, getting pulled over by the cops when marijuana smoke was billowing from your car windows was a sure way to get busted. The scene has been replayed many times in Hollywood movies by Cheech Marin and Tommy Chong, who played pot-smoking hippies in comedies such as "Up in... - [Reading Eagle](#)
- 09-23-2019 **[Geisinger named a Military Friendly Employer](#)**
DANVILLE — Geisinger has been recognized for its commitment to U.S. military veterans and their families by being named to VIQOTRY's 2020 list of Military Friendly Employers. Further strengthening this commitment, Geisinger also announced a new, two-week paid leave benefit for employees... - [Wilkes-Barre Times Leader](#)
- 09-23-2019 **[Rare, deadly virus detected in 3 Pa. counties](#)**
The Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture and Health on Saturday warned Pennsylvanians to take precautionary measures against mosquito bites for themselves and their animals — specifically horses — as the rare mosquito-transmitted viral infection Eastern equine encephalitis has been... - [Wilkes-Barre Citizens' Voice](#)
- 09-23-2019 **[MEDICAL MARIJUANA | Effects of legal medical marijuana widespread](#)**
Pennsylvania's legalization of medical marijuana three years ago has impacted people across the state, even those who aren't seeking cannabis' therapeutic benefits. The law is stimulating millions of dollars of investments, much of it in economically distressed communities, bringing treatment to people dealing... - [Meadville Tribune](#)
- 09-23-2019 **[MEDICAL MARIJUANA | Out-of-state companies dominate state's marijuana industry](#)**
HARRISBURG — Pennsylvania's medical marijuana program is dominated by companies that cut their teeth in the business in other states before gaining a foothold in Pennsylvania. Act 16 of 2016, which legalized the use of medical marijuana, set a high financial bar for growers and processors.... - [Meadville Tribune](#)



- 09-23-2019 **MEDICAL MARIJUANA | Program quickly evolves into multi-million dollar industry**
HARRISBURG — In the two-and-a-half years since Gov. Tom Wolf signed Act 16 of 2016, making Pennsylvania then the 24th state to allow patients to use medical marijuana, the state’s program has created a multi-million dollar industry with dozens of dispensaries scattered across the state.... - [Meadville Tribune](#)
- 09-23-2019 **MEDICAL MARIJUANA | Patients talk about medical marijuana as 'game changer'**
Micheale Hunt emptied a bag of old medication on her couch as she talked about dealing with anxiety, a brain injury and post-traumatic stress disorder after a horseback riding accident in 2018. More than a dozen pill bottles – nine anti-depressants as well as... - [Meadville Tribune](#)
- 09-23-2019 **MEDICAL MARIJUANA | Patients pay full cost as insurance companies balk at covering medical marijuana**
HARRISBURG – Patients using medical marijuana get no help covering the cost because insurance companies won’t cover the costs of the drug. Health Secretary Dr. Rachel Levine said that the private insurers are following the lead of the Medicaid and Medicare programs both of which... - [Meadville Tribune](#)
- 09-23-2019 **MEDICAL MARIJUANA | In wake of vaping scare, officials say medical marijuana 'safe, effective'**
The Pennsylvania Department of Health says legal and regulated medical marijuana products available to certified patients enrolled in the state’s program are “safe and effective.” The statement comes as health professionals – including those from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and Food and Drug Administration... - [Johnstown Tribune-Democrat](#)
- 09-23-2019 **Momentum on opioids**
A vast, interconnected response to the opioid overdose epidemic finally has begun to produce positive results, at least in terms of falling death rates and hospital admissions for overdoses. A new report by the Pennsylvania Health Care Cost Containment Council, or... - [Scranton Times](#)
- 09-23-2019 **Get handle on police suicide**
Police departments in several major cities have been rattled this year by officers dying by suicide, including a record nine in New York City — three over just 10 days in July — and four in Chicago, where eight officers have died by suicide over the past 15 months.... - [Scranton Times](#)
- 09-23-2019 **Clinical research center praised**
DUNCANSVILLE — A world class research facility is hidden just south of the Meadows Intersection. Founded in 1992, the Altoona Center for Clinical Research is a world class facility where research work focuses on the development of newer strategies for treating patients with arthritis and rheumatic disorders.... - [Altoona Mirror](#)
- 09-23-2019 **83 dead, 4 hospitalized in suspected mass drug overdose in Pittsburgh**
PITTSBURGH (AP) — Three people died and four others were hospitalized early Sunday in what police said appeared to be a mass drug overdose... - [Associated Press](#)



- 09-23-2019 **Discontinue using that vaping device until more is known**
Vaping — use of electronic devices rather than burning tobacco to inhale nicotine — at one time seemed to be a good alternative to smoking. But something seems to have gone badly wrong. Federal officials are investigating a spate of serious breathing illnesses... - [Williamsport Sun-Gazette](#)
- 09-23-2019 **Analysis | The Health 202: Doctors are gaining the edge in fight over surprise medical billing**
Doctors may prevail over insurers in the effort to halt surprise medical bills. Here's why: They have a lot of sympathy from members of Congress, many of whom are physicians themselves. But the whole effort is threatened by intense, behind-the-scenes lobbying... - [Washington Post](#)
- 09-23-2019 **How first responders saved more than 80 residents from three-alarm fire at Upper Macungie Township nursing home**
Just before 3 a.m. Sunday, fire crews arrived at an Upper Macungie Township senior facility where a wall of flames raced up a rear wall and more than 80 residents slept peacefully inside. The call is one that emergency responders often dread — a three-alarm fire at a facility where older people suffering from medical issues who may... - [Allentown Morning Call](#)
- 09-23-2019 **How One School Is Tackling the Youth Vaping Epidemic**
SOUTH PORTLAND, Maine — The hallways at South Portland High School were buzzing last week with talk of the mystery disease that has struck hundreds of young adults who vape. Snapchat, Facebook and Instagram have been filled with grisly photos of severely damaged lungs and stories about... - [Stateline.org](#)
- 09-23-2019 **Conference aims to combine technology and do-it-yourself making to assist people with disabilities**
A gathering at the Monroeville Convention Center this week aims to use technology to benefit people with disabilities and help them live as independently as possible. The second annual Assistive Technology Makers' Fair Conference and Expo is a two-day event focused on assistive technology. That term covers any... - [Pittsburgh Post-Gazette](#)
- 09-23-2019 **Waiting for a heart transplant, some children at disadvantage, study says**
What started out as an attempt to create a more-fair priority list for heart transplants in children has put a small group of patients at a new disadvantage, according to a study by cardiologists at UPMC Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh. Nationwide changes in 2016 were made to give higher priority to the sickest... - [Pittsburgh Post-Gazette](#)
- 09-23-2019 **Legislators introduce a bill that would put adult changing tables in public buildings for people with disabilities**
Rep. Dan Miller (D-Allegheny) held a press conference where he was joined by Sen. Camera Bartolotta (R-Washington), Sen. Pam Iovino (D-Allegheny) and advocates to push for adding adult changing facilities in public buildings to help people with disabilities and their families.... - [Pennsylvania Legislative Services](#)
- 09-22-2019 **Pro/Con: As vaping-related illnesses rise, should flavored e-cigarettes be banned? | Opinion**
Vaping and e-cigarettes have exploded in popularity in recent years. Now the practice is in the hot seat for safety concerns. As of Sept. 19, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention had reported 530 confirmed or probable cases of vaping-related lung injury or illness. The Trump... - [Philadelphia Inquirer](#)



- 09-22-2019 **St. Christopher's goes to new owners for \$50 million in bankruptcy sale**
Drexel University and Tower Health agreed Friday to buy St. Christopher's Hospital for Children out of bankruptcy for \$50 million in a deal that will put the safety-net hospital under nonprofit ownership for the first time in more than 20 years. This will ensure that the hospital remains a vital resource to families in... - [Philadelphia Inquirer](#)
- 09-22-2019 **Dangerous mosquito-borne brain disease detected in Pa. and New Jersey**
The Wolf administration on Saturday warned Pennsylvanians that a rare but dangerous mosquito-borne brain disease has been confirmed in three counties. Erie, Carbon, and Monroe. Eastern equine encephalitis, or Triple E, is a virus transmitted to humans and horses by the bite of an infected mosquito. Mosquitoes pick up the... - [Philadelphia Inquirer](#)
- 09-22-2019 **A flowing river of painkillers, all perfectly legal**
Along with produce and the deli bar, Fuel Perks and meat sales, Giant Eagle pharmacies across the region distributed millions of opioid painkillers as the epidemic ballooned and morphed, according to a Drug Enforcement Administration database. At the Brentwood Towne Square store, 3.4 million opioid pain pills were... - [Pittsburgh Tribune-Review](#)
- 09-22-2019 **Westmoreland County flooded with 124M pain pills during critical period of opioid crisis**
Inside Roadway Pharmacy, customers mill through aisles stocked with cough and cold medicines, colorful greeting cards and other drugstore fare. Playing over the sound system is 'Come on Eileen,' the 1982 hit. Some people fill prescriptions after picking up groceries at Ideal Market.... - [Pittsburgh Tribune-Review](#)
- 09-22-2019 **Pittsburgh scientists set their sights on longer-lasting Narcan to combat opioid overdoses**
Two Pittsburgh scientists are trying to keep emergency medicine a step ahead in what's become an opioid arms race. Saadyah Averick, a chemist at the Allegheny Health Network's Research Institute, and his colleague, Benedict Kolber, a neurobiologist at Duquesne... - [Pittsburgh Tribune-Review](#)
- 09-22-2019 **Walmart to stop selling electronic cigarettes at its stores**
Walmart says it will stop selling electronic cigarettes at its namesake stores and Sam's Clubs following a string of illnesses and deaths related to vaping... - [AP](#)
- 09-22-2019 **Editorial: Narcan isn't addiction antidote**
People are alive today because of Narcan. That is absolutely indisputable. Narcan, the brand name for naloxone, is like a pharmacological blindfold. If someone has overdosed on a narcotic, a dose of Narcan can make the body and brain ignore the drugs. Pay no attention to that heroin. What heroin?... - [Pittsburgh Tribune-Review](#)
- 09-22-2019 **Robert Daley: Sam Davis. death shows reform needed in long-term care**
Steelers Nation has been rattled by the death of Sam Davis, a former offensive lineman for the team and four-time Super Bowl champion. After a 13-season career in the National Football League, Davis, who had been suffering from dementia and was legally blind, was recently in the... - [Pittsburgh Tribune-Review](#)



- 09-22-2019 **Lori Falce: Vaping defense is up in smoke**
Vaping was supposed to be better than smoking. That was the idea. It was vapor. Not smoke. All the nicotine with none of the risk. What could go wrong? A lot. People are dying. Not from cancer that they contracted after 40 years of sucking on smoke. Not from old lungs made leathery by a pack-a-day habit.... - [Pittsburgh Tribune-Review](#)
- 09-22-2019 **Letters to the Editor 9/22/2019**
Editor: There seems to be little doubt that smoking cigarettes increases the risk of heart attacks and strokes. My concern at the moment is whether vaping nicotine has a similar effect. Although laboratory animal studies are controversial on the point, preliminary human studies indicate that vaping nicotine products increases... - [Scranton Times](#)
- 09-22-2019 **Letters to the Editor 9/21/2019**
Editor: Never did I envision a day when any dairy cooperative or organization that represents dairy farmers would team up with the enemy to injure the name of good, whole milk. Reports recently surfaced that Dairy Farmers of America, a milk cooperative, helped place a drink comprising a combination of milk and... - [Scranton Times](#)
- 09-22-2019 **At Komen race, personal journeys, joy and celebration**
The crowd started moving, a great mass of pink and gray T-shirts, through an archway of pink and white balloons. Toward the back of the throng, 35 people in light blue shirts gathered. They were .Team Susan. and their shirts made it clear they were family, related or not.... - [Scranton Times](#)
- 09-22-2019 **Scranton community leader battling brain cancer lives his faith in helping others**
In battling brain cancer over the past decade, Tim Schwartz lived his faith. A Baptist minister who helped rebuild hurricane-ravaged communities along the Gulf Coast of the United States, the 42-year-old Scranton man was diagnosed with a brain tumor in 2010, and underwent surgery and... - [Scranton Times](#)
- 09-22-2019 **Cheers and Jeers**
CHEERS to the completion of the first phase of the Solomon Creek flood control project. When the second phase is done in about eight months, residents of South Wilkes-Barre will be able to rest easier after two decades of living with flooding fears due to deteriorating retaining walls... - [Wilkes-Barre Citizens' Voice](#)
- 09-22-2019 **Our view: You are never too young for a heart screening**
Diamonds to the Bloomsburg Fair, our region's venerable and popular annual gala that began its 164th showing Friday. You can head out to see all the animals, farm products, art, quilts, shows and vendors now through Sept. 28. If you've never been there, consider setting a day aside to experience... - [Wilkes-Barre Times Leader](#)
- 09-22-2019 **Dental clinic in Wyomissing helps more than 100 in need**
Jasmine Johnson had been struggling with a serious toothache for six months, the pain so bad it woke her up at night and took the fun out of eating. But though the Reading woman works full time, her new job requires that she complete a probationary period before she begins receiving medical... - [Reading Eagle](#)
- 09-22-2019 **More high-blood pressure medication recalled over carcinogen concerns**
Torrent Pharmaceuticals has expended a recall of blood pressure medication that could be tainted with a cancer-causing chemical. Torrent announced Thursday that it is recalling an additional five lots of medication used to treat hypertension after the discovery of NMBA (for... - [Penn Live, Patriot-News](#)



- 09-22-2019 **Symptoms of financial stress surfaced before Coordinated Health.s sale announcement**
Had Coordinated Health gone for a checkup in the past year, the doctor may have diagnosed financial headaches and mounting stress, aggravated by a \$12.5 million settlement with the Justice Department and a pile of unpaid bills. To cure its ills, the private, for-profit orthopedic network now... - [Allentown Morning Call](#)
- 09-22-2019 **How our community can deal with trauma**
Even though you cannot always see it on the outside, we are all more likely to have some kind of trauma or adverse childhood experience than to have none. With awareness, knowledge and the right tools, we can reduce stigma and create a supportive and safe community for everyone.... - [Lancaster Intelligencer Journal](#)
- 09-22-2019 **Childhood trauma can have long-lasting impacts**
I asked my patient, .As a child did you ever experience any trauma?. He said, .Do you mean like when an older brother hits you?. .Well, not really the usual roughhousing between siblings, but more like any trauma that might have been physical or sexual or emotional in nature,..... - [Lancaster Intelligencer Journal](#)
- 09-22-2019 **Opioid overdose deaths in Maryland drop for first half of the year**
Maryland.s opioid-related deaths dropped during the first half of the year, including those linked to fentanyl, according to new state figures that show a bit of relief from the overdose crisis that is still claiming close to 200 lives a month in the state. There were 1,182 total drug and alcohol-related deaths from January through... - [Baltimore Sun](#)
- 09-22-2019 **Ohio schools buy vaping detectors as concerns over e-cigarettes increase**
As public health officials continue to warn about the use of e-cigarettes, more central Ohio school districts are considering adding monitors to discourage their use among minors. Last week, the Hilliard City School District added vaping detectors, making it at least the second area district to opt for the devices. Earlier this... - [Columbus Dispatch](#)
- 09-22-2019 **Given the vaping crisis, N.J. should not legalize marijuana, an ex-presidential adviser says**
The vaping crisis is in full swing across the country, including New Jersey. Legislative leaders such as Senate President Stephen Sweeney have called for banning vapes outright, while Gov. Phil Murphy has put together a team to recommend next steps after seven deaths and hundreds of cases... - [Trenton Times](#)
- 09-22-2019 **After Murphy veto of eye exams for children, group vows to continue its efforts**
By Kristan Gross With the first days of school around the corner, now is the time when the conversation turns to setting the foundation for success in school. While many topics lead the discussion when it comes to school success, the topic of a child.s vision usually doesn.t make the list . but it should.... - [Trenton Times](#)
- 09-22-2019 **Editorial: The feds may or may not ban flavored e-cigarettes. L.A. shouldn't wait around to see**
If there.s some good to come from the terrible and still ongoing outbreak of vaping-related illness that has damaged the lungs of so many young people, possibly permanently, and killed at least eight people so far, it is that it has motivated authorities at all levels to step up efforts to... - [Los Angeles Times](#)



- 09-22-2019 **[The hidden battle over California's new vaccine law](#)**
Most everyone who heard Gov. Gavin Newsom's words had the same reaction: He's finally on board. After two frenetic weeks spent rewriting a high-profile plan requiring more California schoolchildren to be vaccinated, making changes to Newsom's specifications, legislators and advocacy groups breathed a sigh of relief... - [Los Angeles Times](#)
- 09-22-2019 **[Did You Get The Memo? E-cigarettes, cross-filing and school choice](#)**
Amid all the floor debates, press conferences and committee hearings, the Pennsylvania General Assembly's newest co-sponsorship memos can get lost in the shuffle. That's why The PLS Reporter rounds up some of the most noteworthy co-sponsorship memos each week, so you can stay informed of... - [Pennsylvania Legislative Services](#)
- 09-22-2019 **[At School, 'Everyone Vapes,' and Adults Are in Crisis Mode](#)**
In Alabama, a school removed the doors from bathroom stalls to stop students from sneaking inside to vape. In Colorado, a school decided to forfeit a volleyball game after finding "widespread vaping" and other infractions by the team. And in Pennsylvania, at a school where... - [New York Times](#)
- 09-22-2019 **[Nurses in Four States Strike to Push for Better Patient Care](#)**
Thousands of nurses across the country went on strike Friday morning, pushing for better patient care by demanding improved work conditions and higher pay. About 6,500 National Nurses United members at 12 Tenet Healthcare hospitals in California, Arizona and Florida organized a 24-hour strike, which began... - [New York Times](#)
- 09-22-2019 **[Bernie Sanders Calls for Eliminating Americans' Medical Debt](#)**
Bernie Sanders has long wanted to remake the health care system so no one will have to pay directly for medical care again. Now, he also wants to go back and cancel all the medical debts of people who have been billed under the current system. In a plan released Saturday, Mr. Sanders, the Vermont senator and... - [New York Times](#)
- 09-22-2019 **[Roundup Weedkiller Is Blamed for Cancers, but Farmers Say It's Not Going Away](#)**
From his farm in northwestern Wisconsin, Andy Bensed watched as first one jury, then another and another, delivered staggering multimillion-dollar verdicts to people who argued that their use of a weedkiller sold at nearly every hardware and home-improvement store had caused their cancer.... - [New York Times](#)
- 09-22-2019 **[Analysis | The opioid litigation has more than 2000 plaintiffs. Here's what that involves.](#)**
More than 2,000 state, local and tribal governments are suing two dozen pharmaceutical manufacturers and distributors, arguing that they've helped create an opioid crisis that has claimed hundreds of thousands of American lives. The suits include claims that the industry misled doctors... - [Washington Post](#)
- 09-20-2019 **[City Council amends lead safety bill](#)**
Philadelphia City Council approved amendments to a bill that will provide for lead paint inspections in residential units Thursday, setting up for a vote next week that's been asked for by advocates and citizens for months. The legislation, introduced by Councilmember Blondell Reynolds Brown (D-At... - [Pennsylvania Legislative Services](#)



- 09-20-2019 **Erie County, Pleasant Ridge Manor reach \$2 million pension settlement**
The county has argued for several years that it should not be required to make payments. Erie County and the nursing home it operates will receive \$2 million from the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation to resolve a federal lawsuit filed in April over a dispute that's been ongoing for several years.... - [Erie Times-News](#)
- 09-20-2019 **LVHN continues expansion with plan to acquire troubled Coordinated Health**
Lehigh Valley Health Network, the region's largest health care provider, will acquire Coordinated Health, a smaller system known for its orthopedic services that employs 1,200 people across more than 20 locations in Pennsylvania and New Jersey. "Coordinated Health and LVHN share a strong passion for delivering high... - [Allentown Morning Call](#)
- 09-20-2019 **'Murder by proxy': Pa. lawmaker wants tougher penalty for those who guide people toward suicide**
Following a battle of depression, Shawn Shatto took her own life – and she had help. The help came from an online chat forum that encourages suicide and walks people through the steps to end their life. In some of her last words, the 25-year-old woman expressed fear and reluctance in her posts about... - [Penn Live](#), [Patriot-News](#)
- 09-20-2019 **Pittsburgh scientists set their sights on longer-lasting Narcan to combat opioid overdoses**
Two Pittsburgh scientists are trying to keep emergency medicine a step ahead in what's become an opioid arms race. Saadyah Averick, a chemist at the Allegheny Health Network's Research Institute, and his colleague, Benedict Kolber, a neurobiologist at Duquesne... - [Pittsburgh Tribune-Review](#)
- 09-20-2019 **Company offers public a chance to look inside marijuana dispensary**
HUMMELS WHARF — The public will have an opportunity today to tour Nature's Medicine, a medical marijuana dispensary that opens Thursday. An open house will be held at the 140 N. Susquehanna Trail facility from 2 p.m. to 7 p.m. today to give the public a chance to tour the building, meet... - [Sunbury Daily Item](#)
- 09-20-2019 **Judge rejects Bolus attempt to overturn Nay Aug Park-GCMC parking pact**
SCRANTON — A judge dismissed businessman Bob Bolus' attempt to block a \$1 million parking pact in Nay Aug Park between the city recreation authority and Geisinger Community Medical Center. Lackawanna County Judge James Gibbons ruled against Bolus because he failed... - [Scranton Times](#)
- 09-20-2019 **OD hospitalizations in Schuylkill County drop 11%**
Opioid overdose hospitalizations in Schuylkill County dropped 11% from 2016 to 2018, according to a research brief by the Pennsylvania Health Care Cost Containment Council. It shows the number of opioid overdose hospitalizations across Pennsylvania jumped 4.7% in 2017 but then sank by 833 admissions, or nearly one-fourth,... - [Pottsville Republican and Evening Herald](#)
- 09-20-2019 **Nearly 500 doses of free Naloxone distributed in Chester County**
WEST CHESTER — Close to 500 Chester County residents responded to the offer of free doses of naloxone during Chester County's Naloxone Giveaway Day. Hosted by the Chester County Health Department and the County's Department of Drug & Alcohol Services, Naloxone Giveaway Day is an annual... - [Phoenixville News](#)



- 09-20-2019 **Lehigh Valley Health Network acquiring Coordinated Health**
Lehigh Valley Health Network has announced that it plans to acquire Coordinated Health. Coordinated Health has clinics locally in Lehigh Valley and Brodheadsville. Lehigh Valley has more than a dozen locations in Carbon County, and has announced plans for a \$65 million dollar hospital in Mahoning Township.... - [Lehigh Valley News](#)
- 09-20-2019 **Vets program added in Mapleton**
A new program for veterans, Veteran X, has recently come to Huntingdon County's Mapleton VA Outpatient Clinic. - [Huntingdon Daily News](#)
- 09-20-2019 **Philippines Declares Polio Outbreak After 19 Years Free of the Disease**
MANILA — The Philippines on Thursday announced an outbreak of polio, 19 years after the World Health Organization declared the Southeast Asian country free of the infectious disease. Health Secretary Francisco Duque said government scientists have confirmed the “re-emergence of polio” after one case in the southern province... - [New York Times](#)
- 09-20-2019 **India Plans to Ban E-Cigarettes, as Global Backlash Intensifies**
NEW DELHI — India on Wednesday moved a step closer to a nationwide ban on electronic cigarettes, part of a global backlash amid growing concern about the health risks posed by vaping. The ban could shut the door to a lucrative market for e-cigarette manufacturers such as Juul at a time when they are facing increased... - [New York Times](#)
- 09-20-2019 **Should You Keep Taking Zantac for Your Heartburn?**
Versions of the drug have been found to contain low levels of a carcinogen. But it's still on pharmacy shelves. Here's what you need to know. - [New York Times](#)
- 09-20-2019 **Purdue Pharma Warns That Sackler Family May Walk From Opioid Deal**
Members of the Sackler family could withdraw their pledge to pay \$3 billion as part of a nationwide deal to address the opioid crisis if a bankruptcy judge does not block outstanding state lawsuits against them and their company, Purdue Pharma, Purdue lawyers said in a legal complaint.... - [New York Times](#)
- 09-20-2019 **Abortions in Clinics Decline, but Abortions With Black-Market Pills Are Rising**
Evidence suggests more American women are ‘self-managing’ their abortions. - [New York Times](#)
- 09-20-2019 **Deportation Exemptions to Resume for Immigrants Needing Medical Treatment**
In a policy reversal, the Trump administration on Thursday said it would resume a program that enabled some immigrants to remain in the country without fear of deportation while undergoing lifesaving medical treatment. The unannounced termination last month of much of the so-called deferred... - [New York Times](#)
- 09-20-2019 **HUD Secretary Ben Carson makes dismissive comments about transgender people, angering agency staff**
Housing and Urban Development Secretary Ben Carson expressed concern about “big, hairy men” trying to infiltrate women’s homeless shelters during an internal meeting, according to three people present who interpreted the remarks as an attack on transgender women.... - [Baltimore Sun](#)



- 09-20-2019 **Health board discusses plan to raise awareness of vaping risks**
As vaping becomes more of a national public health concern, the Kanawha-Charleston Health Department plans to rollout education initiatives to make children and parents aware of the risks. Dr. Sherri Young, health officer and executive director for KCHD, said at... - [Charleston Gazette-Mail](#)
- 09-20-2019 **Lawmakers frustrated that state doesn't know yet if Jan. 1 PBM revamp is working**
Although a revamp took effect Jan. 1, state lawmakers must wait to learn whether Medicaid's new system for paying pharmacy middlemen has stopped PBMs from pocketing millions off prescription drugs in the tax-funded health-care program for the poor and disabled.... - [Columbus Dispatch](#)
- 09-20-2019 **For Passion or For Money, More Seniors Keep Working**
ASHBURN, Va. — At 76, Anne Doane is still stocking shelves in a Wegmans here, leaning to fill a display with hairbrushes as Don Henley's "Boys of Summer" plays over the store's sound system. "I never saved throughout my life, so therefore I have to do this,"... - [Stateline.org](#)
- 09-20-2019 **Pelosi hopes prescription drug bill will give Democrats something to show voters in 2020**
Democrats in 2018 seized control of the House of Representatives in large part because they convinced voters that they would be the party to protect Americans' healthcare. But now, as the 2020 presidential campaign narrows the window for passing significant legislation and dominates headlines, rank-and-file Democratic... - [Los Angeles Times](#)
- 09-20-2019 **Medical marijuana mess**
CLARION - The legalization of medical marijuana in Pennsylvania may have eased pain for thousands, but it has raised concerns among counselors and employers. Those worries were addressed at a seminar at Clarion University on Thursday. The seminar - "Medical Marijuana in the Workplace" - featured... - [Oil City Derrick](#)
- 09-20-2019 **Drexel University and Tower Health to buy St. Christopher's out of bankruptcy**
The nonprofit team of Drexel University and Tower Health has agreed to pay \$50 million for St. Christopher's Hospital for Children, edging out the for-profit California hospital company KPC Global in negotiations that lasted until early Friday morning. "This will ensure that the hospital remains a vital resource to... - [Philadelphia Inquirer](#)
- 09-20-2019 **Finding the link: More Ewing sarcoma research is needed**
An alarming and disproportionate number of Ewing sarcoma cases have been reported in our corner of the world. A cancer of the bone and soft tissue, Ewing sarcoma is extremely rare, with approximately 250 cases reported each year in the U.S. But Washington and... - [Pittsburgh Post-Gazette](#)
- 09-20-2019 **After her partner's suicide, Susan Wild broadens legislative platform to tackle mental health**
Mental health wasn't something that Susan Wild expected to become one of her primary policy issues when she came to Congress late last year. That changed after losing her longtime partner, Kerry Acker, who died by suicide in late May. In the months since his death, the Democratic lawmaker... - [Allentown Morning Call](#)



Health Care Recap is a comprehensive daily report on legislative and executive actions in the Pennsylvania capitol and is compiled and edited by PLS.

For subscription information, questions or more information contact PLS at mypls@mypls.com or 717-236-6984. Thank you, Lynn, Jeff, Mike, Matt Hess, Matt Hykes, Deborah, Kara, Cheryl, Aaron, Becky, Amyra, Nick, Nicole, Robert, Emily, Andrew, Shaun, Justin, Sheri, Harrison, and Sarah.

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