

Malady & Wooten, Inc.

Legislative Report

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Pennsylvania Coalition
of **Public Charter Schools**
Choice, Quality, and Accountability in Public Education

SESSION SCHEDULE

2023 SENATE SESSION SCHEDULE

September	18, 19, 20
October	2, 3, 4, 16, 17, 18, 23, 24, 25
November	13, 14, 15
December	11, 12, 13

2023 HOUSE SESSION SCHEDULE

TBD

PDE ANNOUNCEMENTS

COVID-19 Resources

PENNSYLVANIA BULLETIN ANNOUNCEMENTS

STATE CHARTER SCHOOL APPEAL BOARD

[Schedule of Meetings](#)

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

CIRESI CYBER CHARTER REFORM BILL PASSES THE HOUSE

In a bipartisan vote, the PA House passed state Rep. Joe Ciresi's legislation (H.B 1422) that would modernize Pennsylvania's charter school law to specifically address cyber charter schools to ensure transparency, accountability and fiscal responsibility.

"The vast majority of the commonwealth's elected school boards have told legislators PA's charter school law is in desperate need of reform," Ciresi said. "Today we passed a comprehensive reform bill that holds cyber charter schools to the same standards we expect of anyone who receives public funds, including transparency, ethical standards and greater oversight of spending. By ending \$455 million in overpayments and making sure that taxpayer dollars are being properly spent on their intended purpose – educating students – this reform bill will help all our students and taxpayers."

In 2015, the General Assembly passed a law to create an education funding formula based on actual student enrollment and cost factors to address an outdated, flawed and inequitable system of funding school districts. However, the bill did not address cyber charter schools, which continue to receive the same funding as brick-and-mortar charter schools despite having materially lower costs, leading Ciresi to sponsor H.B. 1422 to address this issue.

Ciresi's legislation would set a single statewide tuition rate for non-special education students at cyber schools that is better aligned to the actual cost of cyber education and applies the existing three-tier special education funding formula currently used for school districts, which sets funding based on the student's special education needs, to cyber charter schools.

The bill also would:

- Require transparency in cyber charter advertising expenses and prohibits the use of taxpayer money for sponsorships of parades and professional sporting events.
- Cap cyber charter school unassigned fund balances, which increased from \$22 million in 2018-19 to \$250 million in 2021-22.
- Require wellness checks for students to ensure their wellbeing and to verify cyber school participation.
- Set requirements for cyber charter schools and their management companies to have their records be open to the public, hold open meetings, and perform annual audits.
- Prohibit taxpayer funding from being used to pay for field trips and gifts and incentives to enroll or consider enrolling in a cyber charter school.
- Require cyber charter schools to demonstrate they are spending the additional money they are receiving for students with the highest special education needs on providing those special education services.
- Allow cyber charter schools to use school district facilities for standardized testing and requires school districts to provide transportation for cyber special education students.

"My goal with this bill was to preserve school choice, but while ensuring cyber charter schools are held to the same rules and regulations as traditional public schools," Ciresi said. "These reforms will make sure taxpayer dollars are being spent on educating students or returned to the taxpayers – and not spent on sponsoring professional sports teams, giving away Target gift cards, or growing fund balances. By making

sure cyber charter schools operate openly and with proper oversight, we will help our students – regardless of what type of school they go to – and our taxpayers.”

The bill now goes on to the Senate for consideration.

CAPITOLWIRE: HOUSE APPROVES STATE SPENDING PLAN AFTER SHAPIRO PLEDGES THAT HE'LL LINE-ITEM VETO A CONTROVERSIAL SCHOOL VOUCHER PROVISION

The state House voted Wednesday to concur to changes made by the Senate to the 2022-23 spending plan, sending the legislation to the governor who'd hours earlier had urged the chamber to approve the bill, saying he'd line-item veto a school voucher measure opposed by House Democrats.

In his statement ahead of the vote on House Bill 611, Gov. Josh Shapiro reaffirmed his support for school vouchers for poor families in under-performing school districts, but said that he didn't believe fighting over the issue should cause a budget impasse. Senate Republicans, who'd inserted the school voucher provision in the budget bill last week, said that they'd been double-crossed by Shapiro even though the governor had urged them not to pass the budget in its current form.

“Today, Governor Shapiro has decided to betray the good faith agreement we reached, leaving tens of thousands of children across Pennsylvania in failing schools,” Senate Republican leaders said in a [joint statement](#) after the House vote. “It is a shame the governor does not have enough respect and standing within his own party to follow through with his promise.”

With Shapiro's line-item veto pledge, the budget represents major concessions from both parties – as Republicans lost one of their major priorities in the school voucher plan and House Democrats were forced to accept a budget that spent far less than the one they'd proposed earlier in the month.

Even so, the plan includes record education funding and several other notable provisions, including some popular with members of both parties. Those include \$50 million in state funding for the Whole Home Repair program, \$20 million for the Historically Disadvantaged Business Program, a \$66.7 million increase for Child Care Services allowing up to 75,000 low-income families to continue to be enrolled in subsidized childcare through the Child Care Works Program; \$50 million into the Hospital and Healthsystem Emergency Relief Fund; \$20.7 million to increase mileage rates for ambulance services; and \$20 million to increase base funding for counties to provide critical mental health services.

The spending plans also includes the first-ever state funding for indigent defense.

“A budget is a statement of our priorities – and with new investments in students, teachers, seniors, moms, families, farmers, workers, cops, emergency responders, business owners, and more, this is a budget for all Pennsylvanians,” Shapiro [said](#) in a statement after the vote. “Pennsylvania is the only state in the nation with a full-time, divided legislature – meaning nothing gets done unless it can make it through our Republican-led Senate and our Democratic-led House. I'm proud that this budget – one that makes historic investments in public education, public safety, workforce development, agriculture, and economic development – passed both the House and Senate, and I look forward to signing it.”

The House on Wednesday also voted, 197-6, to concur on changes made by the Senate House Bill 1100, legislation that would increase the income limits for seniors and those with disabilities to qualify for rebates on their rent or property taxes. House Bill 1100 would make the rebates available to more than 170,000 people, Rep. Steve Samuelson, D-Northampton, said on the House floor.

The fighting over the budget isn't over though. Lawmakers must still approve code bills to implement some of the spending authorized in the budget. And Shapiro can't even sign the budget bill until it's been signed in the Senate and unless leaders in that chamber add summer session days, that chamber isn't scheduled to return to the Capitol until mid-September.

PENNSYLVANIA HOUSE PASSES BIPARTISAN BUDGET THAT DELIVERS ON GOVERNOR SHAPIRO'S KEY PRIORITIES, MAKES HISTORIC, COMMONSENSE INVESTMENTS TO CREATE A STRONGER ECONOMY, SAFER AND HEALTHIER COMMUNITIES, AND BETTER SCHOOLS

On Wednesday, the Pennsylvania House of Representatives passed HB 611, a budget bill for fiscal year 2023-24, which delivers on Governor Josh Shapiro's commonsense proposals to solve the most pressing issues Pennsylvanians face. Governor Shapiro plans to sign this budget bill, accomplishing many of the priorities he laid out in March during his budget address, including historic funding for public K-12 basic education, significant investments in workforce development, new funding for community and economic development, and critical investments in agriculture and public safety.

Governor Shapiro's first budget marks a significant step in his work to create an economy that works for all, make Pennsylvania communities safer, and ensure every Pennsylvania child has access to a quality education.

Knowing that the House and Senate will not reach consensus at this time to enact the PASS scholarship program and unwilling to hold up our entire budget process over this issue, the Governor plans to line-item veto the full \$100 million appropriation for that program.

"A budget is a statement of our priorities – and with new investments in students, teachers, seniors, moms, families, farmers, workers, cops, emergency responders, business owners, and more, this is a budget for all Pennsylvanians," said Governor Shapiro. "Pennsylvania is the only state in the nation with a full-time, divided legislature – meaning nothing gets done unless it can make it through our Republican-led Senate and our Democratic-led House. I'm proud that this budget – one that makes historic investments in public education, public safety, workforce development, agriculture, and economic development – passed both the House and Senate, and I look forward to signing it."

In March, Governor Shapiro presented his [first budget proposal](#) to the people of Pennsylvania with proposed investments to lower costs for Pennsylvanians, support businesses and speed up permitting, help older adults stay in their homes, invest in public education, protect and strengthen communities, and safeguard our environment.

The House also voted to pass HB 1100, which mirrors Governor Shapiro's proposed expansion of the Property Tax/Rent Rebate program. As a result of this expansion – the first for the program since 2006 – nearly 175,000 more Pennsylvanians will qualify and many of the 400,000 seniors who already qualify will see their rebates nearly double, with future increases to the program being tied to inflation.

Historic \$1 Billion Investment in K-12 Public Education

This budget makes a **\$1 billion investment** in K-12 public schools, including the largest increase in the Basic Education Funding (BEF) Formula in Pennsylvania history. Thanks to this budget, for the first time ever, Pennsylvania will spend over \$10 billion on K-12 public education funding. This budget includes:

- **\$567 million** in basic education funding for Pennsylvania school districts to be distributed through the Basic Education Funding (BEF) Formula, enabling all school districts to have the basic resources they need to provide a high-quality education for Pennsylvania students. This is the largest BEF increase in history.
- **\$100 million** increase to Level Up to ensure more resources go to Pennsylvania's most underfunded schools.
- **\$50 million** in special education funding, reinforcing Pennsylvania's commitment to equitable education for all students.
- **\$125 million** in school safety and environmental improvement grants so all children have the opportunity to grow and learn in safe, healthy environments.
- A **\$46.5 million** increase in funding to provide universal free breakfast to Pennsylvania's 1.7 million public school students regardless of income and free lunch to all 22,000 Pennsylvania students who are eligible for reduced-price lunches through the National School Lunch Program.

- **\$10 million** to provide Pennsylvania’s student teachers with annual stipends.
- **\$7 million** to support dual enrollment opportunities for high school students.

Historic Investments in Community & Economic Development

This budget spurs job creation, fosters innovation, and provides the funding to make Pennsylvania more competitive on a national scale. This budget also invests in communities across the Commonwealth, supporting historically disadvantaged businesses and helping Pennsylvanians maintain safe, healthy homes. This budget includes:

- A **\$50 million investment** in the Whole-Home Repairs program, taking a burden off the shoulders of those living paycheck to paycheck while ensuring they can afford to maintain their homes.
- A **\$20 million investment** to fund the Historically Disadvantaged Business Program to invest in small minority-, women-, and veteran-owned businesses in the Commonwealth and provide sustainable support.
- A **\$13 million investment** to make Pennsylvania more competitive on a national scale and help the Commonwealth become a leader in economic development, innovation, and job creation.
- A **\$2 million investment** in the Municipal Assistance Program to help the local, municipal, and county governments that are on the frontlines of supporting their communities and a **\$1.25 million** increase for the Strategic Management Planning Program (STMP) to help local governments create long-term plans for financial success.
- A **\$1 million investment** in the Manufacturing PA Innovation Program, which connects Pennsylvania’s universities with businesses to spur innovation and job creation here in the Commonwealth.

Funding Indigent Defense for the First Time Ever

Previously, Pennsylvania was one of only two states in the country that did not allocate state funding for indigent defense, but that changes with this budget. This budget invests:

- **\$7.5 million** to fund indigent defense for the first time in Pennsylvania history, ensuring public defenders have the resources they need to provide legal representation to defendants who cannot pay for it on their own.

Expanding Apprenticeships & Vocational and Technical Education

Building off the Governor’s Executive Order announcing that 92 percent of state government jobs are open to Pennsylvanians without college degrees, this budget would ensure more Pennsylvanians have the freedom to chart their own course by expanding our workforce, investing in vo-tech, and supporting apprenticeship programs, including:

- A **\$23.5 million investment** in workforce training and vo-tech programs.
- A **\$6 million investment** in apprenticeship and pre-apprentice programming that will lead to family-sustaining wages.
- **\$3.5 million** in funding for the Schools-to-Work Program through the Department of Labor & Industry to develop and expand career pathways for high school students via partnerships between schools, employers, organizations, and the Commonwealth.

Cutting Red Tape and Improving the Commonwealth’s Licensing and Permitting Processes

Governor Shapiro is [committed](#) to making government work more effectively and efficiently to serve Pennsylvanians. This budget aims to address delays in state licensing, permitting, and certification processes and cut red tape for businesses, and includes:

- **\$2.91 million** to create the Office of Transformation and Opportunity, a one-stop-shop for businesses looking to grow and contribute to aggressively reigniting Pennsylvania’s economy.

- **\$6.4 million** to modernize permitting processes at the Department of Environmental Protection and clear permit backlogs.

Investing in Mental Health, Addressing Maternal Mortality, & Supporting EMS and Health Care Providers

This budget makes critical investments in public health and wellness, including significant investments in mental health and the first-ever investment in addressing maternal mortality, including:

- A **\$66.7 million** increase for Child Care Services allowing up to 75,000 low-income families to continue to be enrolled in subsidized childcare through the Child Care Works Program.
- **\$50 million** into the Hospital and Healthsystem Emergency Relief Fund to support the vital work of hospitals.
- **\$20.7 million** to increase mileage rates for ambulance services, protecting access to healthcare and ensuring that EMS workers and first responders are properly reimbursed for the critical care they provide.
- **\$20 million** to increase base funding for counties to provide critical mental health services and address deepening workforce shortages.
- **\$2.3 million** to expand maternal health programming to allow for implementation of prevention strategies to reduce maternal mortality and morbidity.
- Funding to help an additional **850 individuals** with an intellectual disability and/or autism get off waitlists for home and community-based services.
- **\$5 million** in funding for the Help at Home (OPTIONS) program through the Department of Aging, to reduce the waitlist of seniors seeking services that will allow them to stay in their homes.
- A **\$1 million** investment in grants for Senior Community Centers to improve safety and accessibility, repair or replace essential equipment, and invest in technology supplies to continue creating safe spaces for older Pennsylvanians to gather and socialize.

Repairing Our Infrastructure While Supporting Law Enforcement

To ensure Pennsylvanians are and feel safe in their communities, this budget ensures that Pennsylvania police departments are well-staffed, well-funded, well-trained, and well-equipped and prioritizes public safety while making more funding available for our infrastructure needs, including:

- Sustainable funding for the Pennsylvania State Police (PSP) through the General Fund, reducing PSP's reliance on the Motor License Fund (MLF) over the next four years.
- **\$16.4 million** in new funding for four trooper cadet classes in FY 23-24, to train 384 new troopers, fill staffing gaps, provide more coverage, and ensure that Pennsylvania State Police are well-funded and well-trained.
- **\$40 million** in state funding for the Violence Intervention and Prevention program – housed in the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency – to address community violence throughout the Commonwealth.
- **\$355,000** for a new unit within the Department of Corrections, run by the Secretary of the Board of Pardons, to address backlogs in the pardons process and help second chances come sooner.
- A **\$250,000** increase to support the It's On Us PA initiative – which aims to create an environment where sexual violence is unacceptable and survivors are supported – and to keep college students across Pennsylvania safe from campus sexual assault.

Making Critical Investments in the Future of Pennsylvania Agriculture

Pennsylvania's agriculture sector is a major economic driver for the Commonwealth, contributing \$132 billion a year to the economy and supporting over 580,000 jobs in Pennsylvania – this budget invests:

- **\$34 million** to help poultry farmers impacted by the hi-path avian influenza crisis pay for testing and get reimbursed for losses to their flocks.
- **\$2 million** in the Fresh Food Financing Initiative that will contribute to better health outcomes by improving access to PA-grown, processed, and produced foods.
- **\$2 million** to fund the State Food Purchase Program to provide state funds for emergency food assistance for low-income Pennsylvanians.
- **\$1 million** to create a new Organic Center of Excellence, one of the first-of-its kind, to empower and support organic farmers and businesses.

COOPER BILL WOULD FOSTER SCHOOL DUAL ENROLLMENT PROGRAMS

Legislation co-prime sponsored by Rep. Jill Cooper (R-Westmoreland) cleared the House Education Committee with a unanimous vote the other week. [House Bill 1258](#) proposes improvements to the current law pertaining to dual enrollment programs in Pennsylvania schools by temporarily removing the requirement that students enrolled in such programs are removed from the school's average daily membership.

Commonly referred to as the "ADM," the average daily membership impacts state funding to local school districts.

"Requiring students be removed from their school's daily count creates a disincentive for school districts to have dual enrollment programs," Cooper said. "Harrisburg shouldn't be hindering innovation; we should be fostering it."

Dual enrollment programs allow high school students to enroll in college-level classes, earning college credits while still enrolled in high school. In some cases, college classes are taught by certified high school teachers and in the high school facility.

House Bill 1258 would pause the practice of removing dually enrolled students from the school's average daily membership for two years. During this time, the Department of Education would provide data to the General Assembly, so a more permanent process can be established.

The concern was brought to Cooper by administrators at Franklin Regional School District.

"I am thankful that Superintendent Dr. Jamie Piraino alerted me to this problem," Cooper said. "When a student begins earning college credits in high school, they save themselves and their families a significant amount of money and helps them avoid student debt."

The subject also had the attention of Rep. Stephen Kinsey (D-Philadelphia). He and Cooper worked together to draft House Bill 1258 and also came together as co-chairs of the Pennsylvania House Bipartisan "Meet Me in the Middle" Caucus, which hosted a press conference earlier this month. Reps. Patty Kim (D-Dauphin/Cumberland) and Jamie Flick (R-Lycoming/Union) are also co-chairs.

"A proposal like this is bipartisan, for good reason. It addresses a very specific need that holds back Pennsylvania students from very worthwhile programs," said Cooper. "Fixing a problem like this transcends party lines."

TOPPER PROPOSAL TO INCREASE LEARNING FLEXIBILITY ADVANCES

To further modernize Pennsylvania's educational opportunities, the House Education Committee advanced with unanimous, bi-partisan support legislation by Republican Chairman Jesse Topper (R-Bedford/Fulton) to change the instructional time requirement to 180 days or 990 secondary and 900 elementary hours.

[House Bill 1507](#) would give all education institutions an increased flexibility in the way in which school districts, intermediate units and career and technical centers schedule instructional time. Doing so allows for increased individualized education, student support and more focused workforce development.

"The bill provides equality across the education spectrum by giving all schools the option for instructional flexibility without needing to request it from the Department of Education," Topper said.

Topper crafted the legislation after several tours of various schools where administrators indicated the day and hour mandate in current law is creating a barrier to customize schedules to meet the needs of students.

Current law dictates schools provide 180 days of instruction per school year. However, a school board is permitted to request a school week be comprised of 27.5 hours as the equivalent for five school days. Additionally, the secretary of Education can approve, upon request, a school term containing a minimum of 990 secondary or 900 elementary hours of instruction as the equivalent of 180 school days.

House Bill 1507 would set the standard of 180 days or 990 secondary and 900 elementary hours. The bill will now be considered by the full House.

CEPEDA-FREYTIZ PRAISES PASSAGE OF BILL THAT WOULD LESSEN TEACHER SHORTAGES

State Rep. Johanny Cepeda-Freytiz, D-Berks, praised House passage of her bill, which would provide educator certification and employment for immigrants in Pennsylvania.

The bill ([H.B. 1067](#)), now on its way to the Senate for consideration, would amend the qualifications of a teacher by adding that department-certified or permitted teachers who hold a valid immigrant visa, work visa, or valid employment authorization document which allows them to work in the United States are eligible to teach in the public schools of the Commonwealth.

Cepeda-Freytiz said enactment of this bill would expand much-needed access to teacher certification. The Pennsylvania Department of Education's Teacher Information Management System prevents non-U.S. citizens from completing an application for certification unless they are applying for a certificate to teach a foreign language or hold an immigrant visa (Green Card) and sign an affidavit of intent to become a U.S. citizen.

"Education is the foundation of progress. We need a commonsense approach that can help us put Pennsylvania back on track. I am proud to champion this issue and I cannot wait until this bill is signed into law," Cepeda-Freytiz said.

"Deferred Action for Childhood Arrival (DACA) participants are unable to attain educator certification in Pennsylvania. The removal of this barrier could help the Commonwealth address its teacher shortage areas, including one of the worst shortages of racially diverse educators in the country," she added. Some of the subjects with the greatest teacher shortages in the state are English as a Second Language, special education, and STEM.

CO-SPONSOR MEMOS

Sen. Kristin Phillips-Hill

- [Providing greater flexibility, innovation and individualized instruction and opportunity for students](#)

Rep. Carol Kazeem

- [Charter School Enrollment Caps](#)

COMMITTEE NEWS

Senate Education Committee

6/26/23, 11:00 a.m., Hearing Room 1, North Office Building

The committee met to consider the nomination of Acting Sec. Khalid Mumin, Department of Education (PDE).

A motion for a favorable recommendation of the nominee was unanimously **adopted**.

Sen. Amanda Cappelletti (D-Montgomery) introduced her constituent, Sec. Mumin, and noted he has worked as a superintendent for 25 years. She added he has previously worked in Lower Merion School District and Reading School District where he has shown his commitment to access to programming, equity and other values. Sen. Cappelletti said Sec. Mumin holds degrees from Pennsylvania State University and the University of Pennsylvania.

Sec. Mumin thanked the committee for considering his nomination. He explained he has met with 45 senators and said he was glad to report "we are on the same page." Sec. Mumin said he was surprised to find senators in close agreement as a lifelong educator who "used to sit on the other side of the street" and ponder the happenings in the Capitol. Sec. Mumin remarked that he has "very big items to tackle over the next several years," but he remains committed to collaborating with legislators and other departments to move Pennsylvania forward. "I need your expertise at the table," he said. Sec. Mumin stated there was much talk about the "new normal" after the pandemic and the department is now in a position to create the new normal. He said he was looking forward to working with the senators to retain talent in the commonwealth.

Sen. Ryan Aument (R-Lancaster) said he hoped the secretary could focus on "breaking down barriers" that exist as impediments to education. He specifically pointed out that there are a high number of students who are not proficiently reading by fourth grade. He explained that reading at the beginning of a student's career is critical for becoming academically proficient. He lauded Lancaster School District for their work in improving reading programs for students and implementing early screening for dyslexia. Sen. Aument said he introduced a bill to require screening and intervention for dyslexia and other learning disabilities that would impact reading. He questioned if the secretary would support the legislation. Sec. Mumin reported that successful pathways out of 3rd grade involve reading. He described his work at a former school district where he partnered with United Way to provide a reading initiative. He remarked that the legislation is an opportunity to come together and work on the areas. Sec. Mumin commented that as secretary of education, he has access to federal and other state education leaders regarding literacy. He stated that he is also interested in including various groups of people in the conversation.

Minority Chairman Lindsey Williams (D-Allegheny) said she would otherwise be in support of Sec. Mumin's due to his excellent work in various districts and glowing recommendations from everyone who has known him. Chairman Williams continued that she would have liked to discuss breakfast programs, career and technical education (CTE) and community colleges, however, Sec. Mumin and Gov. Josh Shapiro support lifeline scholarships. She stated that school vouchers will harm school districts' funding. She highlighted that she cannot support school vouchers while public schools still struggle with toxic facilities, among many other issues. She reiterated her opposition to [SB 795](#) and any form it takes.

Sen. Michele Brooks (R-Mercer) noted that there is significant angst regarding schools for a variety of issues, including issues from the COVID-19 pandemic. She highlighted the importance of ensuring that parents have autonomy in their decisions. Sec. Mumin replied that one of Gov. Shapiro's concerns is related to mental health and providing support, which necessitates parental involvement. He highlighted the importance of safely built schools. "We have to be looking through the lenses of innovation and listening to the students," he said.

Sen. Timothy Kearney (D-Delaware) questioned Sec. Mumin on the Education Improvement Tax Credit Program (EITC), which receives \$39 million and the Opportunity Scholarship Tax Credit (OSTC) Program, which receives \$6.5 million. He asked if there was a way to track attendance or academic outcomes for those students. Sec. Mumin said he was not prepared to speak on those topics but would return to his team and evaluate the numbers. Sen. Kearney remarked that it is important to see how money is currently used before changing the method. He commented that other states that have implemented vouchers for students have experienced similar or slightly negative results. Sec. Mumin explained that the Shapiro administration is still in the preliminary stages of discussions regarding the lifeline scholarship program. He stated that he plans to bring many people around the table.

Sen. Jarrett Coleman (R-Lehigh) asked what PDE does well. Sec. Mumin highlighted the work of teachers that provide good education. He noted that public schools are well attended. Sen. Coleman commented that those students often have no choice but to attend a public school. Sec. Mumin explained that he doesn't believe assessments are accurate in determining the ability of students. He detailed PDE serves in a support role for school districts, as well as issuing certificates to teachers. He lauded teachers for their work.

Sen. Carolyn Comitta (D-Chester) stated that Sec. Mumin is an excellent candidate and an "exemplar educational leader," and she strongly supports his nomination. She detailed her agreement with the secretary on many issues but stated her opposition to school vouchers. She explained the Commonwealth Court decision that the General Assembly has not adequately supported public schools. She remarked that school vouchers are not an answer to equitable funding for schools. Sec. Mumin said he agreed that struggling schools deserve more funding. He emphasized that the governor believes the state should provide quality education. "This year's initial budget is a downpayment for us to get to the point where we can satisfy the law," he said.

Sen. Anthony Williams (D-Philadelphia) said he needs the secretary's immediate assistance regarding a matter regarding Philadelphia School District. He detailed that in order for students in need of residential treatment to address drug additions, among other issues, they need to be transferred out of the district. Sen. Williams remarked that although he, as well as other legislators, have requested information on the topic, but the district has yet to respond. In another issue, Sen. Williams said a report two years ago indicated the African American Charter School Coalition (AACSC) has been discriminated against by the area's intermediate unit (IU). He detailed the district previously supported hiring a law firm to investigate the matter, however, senators have not received any more information on the issue. He stated that while the school district requests additional funding, they continue to fail students by providing sub-standard education. He remarked that his constituents support any solution other than sending their child to a failing school. He noted that the Delaware tax loophole has still not been solved, and those losses exceed \$400 million "If we're going to this process of not voting because it doesn't go towards the public good, then it needs to be consistent and not applied specifically because a special interest group arrives at the Capitol crying that they're not getting their fair share," he said. Sen. Williams highlighted that Sec. Mumin comes from the Philadelphia School district, and he knows what a good school and teacher look like. Sec. Mumin detailed how the Philadelphia School District impacted his life. He agreed that "standing still is not an option."

Chairman David Argall (R-Schuylkill) highlighted the critical role of intermediate units (IUs). He noted they must also serve charter schools. He questioned if charter school students have a right to be served by the IU in Philadelphia. He asked if he would enforce the law. Sec. Mumin said he did not want to "give an answer in isolation." He noted the importance of continuing professional development. He said he would study the performance of IUs with his team.

Sen. Aument reiterated his concerns regarding literacy and highlighted the need for evidence-based practices. He pointed out a report from Michigan University that detailed the relationship between social media and mental health issues. He described asking teachers if smartphones have helped to learn or hindered it, to which many say that phones are a hindrance in the classroom. He questioned Sec. Mumin's position. Sec. Mumin noted Gov. Shapiro has proposed \$500 million for student mental health. He stated that administrators must use technology to be on the forefront of innovation. He explained that Pde must work to support teachers and administrations with professional development.

Sen. Brooks questioned the usefulness of new math which approaches math from a critical-thinking perspective. She remarked that many students find a distaste in math through the new perspective, which ruins the subject for that student. She suggested that if a student doesn't grasp 'new math' they may have a better understanding of the subject in a more isolated setting. Sec. Mumin pointed out that assessments are 'problematic' and explained that many students study things that do not appear on the state assessment. He reiterated the importance of professional development. Sen. Brooks said she was interested in continuing the conversation.

Sen. Coleman asked how Sec. Mumin plans to keep himself accountable while in the position. Sec. Mumin detailed his plans to be visible and verbalize agenda items the department maintains.