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SHELLY SHELL
PHILLY WONDER WOMAN
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LOCAL SPORTS
WHERE HAS BASEBALL GONE?
A LOOK AT THE MOUNT AIRY BASEBALL LEAGUE



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Fried Chicken-	\$14.50
w/White Meat	\$15.50
Chicken Wings-	\$13.25
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ASTRO-FUNK'S PHILLY WONDER WOMAN IS SAVING THE YOUTH & TAKING OVER TIKTOK



By Shelly Shell Williams
Photo Credit: La'Cinda Trotter

La'Cinda Trotter, the phenom known by several names, is Unsung in Philadelphia. I'm grateful to be able to tell her story. Her career has been a fascinating journey taking her from house parties to acting in movies. However, one of the most extraordinary parts is that she has dedicated her career to helping the most vulnerable youth in Philadelphia. She has invested her time physically, emotionally, and spiritually. La'Cinda's approach to youth development is mutual respect and listening to their ideas while addressing their needs; she finds ways to turn the trauma into positive outcomes.

La'Cinda Trotter has over 14,000 followers on Tiktok, a new clothing line and Producer of the reality show *Surviving Philly TV*. She is a beast when it comes to promoting and will stop at nothing to get the message to the masses, and she is Uptown born and raised.

Shelly Shell: What is your fondest memory growing up in Uptown?

Philly Wonder woman: Wow, my fondest memory was being a part of Astro-Funk & Rocksteady emcees. We enjoyed ourselves so much being in DJ Grand V's garage, Mixing and Scratching, doing house parties and block parties.

Shelly Shell: Who are some of your top mentors or influences from Uptown?

Philly Wonder woman: DJ Grand V (Rip) Parry P, DJ Cosmic Kev, Grand Tone!

Shelly Shell: What did you aspire to be as a youth? Are you doing what you thought you wanted or thought you would do?

Philly Wonder woman: I wanted to be a Basketball player and an Actor. Well, I am an Actress. I have been in several films, even one with Vivica Fox Produced by Terrance Tykeem (Jason's Letter) but no ball-

player, lol.

Shelly Shell: You are getting your P Diddy on by having a few different names; The Bible Princess, Philly Wonder Woman, Aunt Cindy; why so many names?

Philly Wonder Woman: So many names came from the people, The Bible Princess is because I try to guide people to the Lord, Philly Wonder Woman well that's because I played the character Wonder Woman in a film Produced by Anthony Reed. Jr. When kids saw me, they would say there go that Lady Wonder Woman but then a closer friend said; I'm going to stay calling you Philly Wonder Woman because you are always trying to save the youth. Aunt Cindy came from my young son Nico; he said, mom, on your radio show, you're like an auntie type of person, so there you go.

Shelly Shell: You are always working; what are some of your current projects?

Philly Wonder Woman: I am currently an Actress in a Jermaine Quick Film, due to be released soon. However, a friend of mine, Novi J and I are working on a Philly Reality TV show called *Surviving Philly*; Music is My Life (For Philly artists ages 18-100)

Shelly Shell: You tried your hand at acting; what are some of the roles you've played?

Philly Wonder Woman: I played a crack head twice, and I was hoping I wouldn't get typecast because I did so well, Lol. I play an activist, a Teacher Twice, Wonder Woman, News Reporter, a Building manager, and more.

Shelly Shell: Who are some of the greats you admire when it comes to success?

Philly Wonder Woman: The

first person I admire is my mother, Rev. Juanita C. Robinson. She's such an amazing person. When I'm wrong, she tells me without hesitation. In the professional world, it's Antoine Johnson, Natasha Harris, Angela Bassett, Julia Roberts, Taraji P. Henson, Deja Lynn Alvarez, Michelle Martin, Ming Leone, Serita Lewis, and Corine Landauer!

Shelly Shell: You've seen significant growth and expansion with TikTok; how were you able to grow your audience and begin to get paid?

Philly Wonder Woman: I have to tell the truth; I took TikTok classes which were so informative; after that, my following continued to grow, and now I am constantly sent products for me to promote for people and get paid while doing it.

Shelly Shell: What are five things you would like to happen in 2022?

Philly Wonder Woman:

At least an additional 10k in my monthly paycheck!

The reality show "Surviving Philly TV" to become a significant part of history.

Become a Fashion Week Model.

Become an official woman sponsored by Puma

Be granted a bus to take the At-Risk youth that I work without of Philly on trips so they can see other things more exciting than Gun violence.

I have to add this one: Meet Missy Elliott and Taraji P. Henson!

Shelly Shell: Out of all the projects you've worked on, which is the most fulfilling?

Philly Wonder Woman: The most fulfilling project that I worked on was writing my own film about Bullying and Suicide. Called *Death saved my Life Seen through a child's eyes*, and you can see it on YouTube.

Shelly Shell: What do you want most out of your career?

Philly Wonder Woman: More support!!

Shelly Shell: What do you believe is the most essential wealth or money?

Philly Wonder Woman: Wealth brings financial security!

Let's support Philly Wonder Woman and making all her desires a reality. Follow her social media @PhillyWonderWoman.

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LOCAL SPORTS

WHERE HAS BASEBALL GONE? A LOOK AT THE MOUNT AIRY BASEBALL LEAGUE



By EJ Holt
Sports Editor
Photo Credit: Mt. Airy Baseball

Real quick. Who won the World Series this year? Who was the MVP? Who was the Home Run leader? If you answered with a shoulder shrug emoji like I did, then you might be a bit out of touch with the game of baseball too. Did you know that the 2021 World Series, the two best teams locked in final competition, drew an average of 11 million viewers? Eleven million sounds like a lot of eyeballs on the TV right? By comparison a random mid-season NBA game attracts 24 million viewers, and a mid-season NFL game 28 million.

What was once known as America's Pastime, can possibly be called simply America's past in this day and age. With the marketing genius and year round content provided by the NFL and NBA, MLB has fallen behind the two juggernauts to a distant third in the consciousness of most sports fans. But why? Is it because baseball doesn't currently have that phenom generational talent that transcends sports and draws the casual fan in? There is no LeBron James of baseball. There isn't that guy that is just so

good and so dominant that you are forced to tune in. Also MLB does a poor job marketing their players to the point where they have a consistent household name. Could it be the nature of the sport? Baseball by nature is a slower game than the other top sports. With the attention span of the natural human being at an all time low and falling, there simply may not be enough action to satisfy the viewing audience.

Is it because there aren't enough black players in major league baseball? There is a fair argument to make that young African Americans will gravitate to a sport that has a player that looks like them. From my experience, I remember watching Michael Jordan and Barry Sanders, then going outside to dunk with my tongue out or juke somebody out of their shoes. Back when Jackie Robinson kicked in the doors to Major League baseball, there were quickly more to follow him. From 1947 to 1973 the number of black players in baseball had climbed to 24 percent. When Robinson left in 1973 the percentage of blacks dropped to 18. Fast forward to today, USA today counted the percentage of black baseball players at 8 percent in 2019, 7.8

percent in 2020, 7 percent in 2021. There has been a generational gap between African American youth and the game of baseball. At some point the game stopped being played and taught to inner city youth. A big factor in this was Major League Baseball discovering the pipeline of Dominican talent. Much more resources went into building young talent from the Dominican Republic that they can then bring over into the United States at a much cheaper cost. It's always the money. All the talent cultivation, showcase events and private coaching that would have drawn in more American black youths, was sent out of the country to develop Latino players. Today Latino players remain a highly sought after commodity in building a roster in the MLB.

So how do we change things? How do we bring back the game of baseball. Like any major reclamation project you start from the ground up. It won't happen overnight, but as long as there is foundation to build on, it will happen. I had a conversation with Mount Airy Baseball League Commissioner, Daniel Winterstein to talk about that very foundation. Surprisingly that foundation

was already right under our nose. Daniel Winterstein the MABL have been around for over 30 years. Their games and practice are all located in the 19119 and 19150 area. Starting out with 2 teams and a dream, the Mt. Airy baseball League has blossomed into a 50 team league with over 700 kids. The MABL prides itself on being the only racially diverse organization in the area. Currently Daniel Winterstein is on a recruiting mission. He has been to every school in the uptown area and handed out over 6000 flyers. The MABL is looking for more players to fill up the newly renovated Finley Field located at 7701 Mansfield Ave 19150. The Mt. Airy Baseball league raised \$25,000 dollars for the renovation of the field and thanks to the generous gesture of Councilmember Parker, to match that \$25,000, the Finley Field now has \$50,000 worth of renovations for everyone to take advantage of. Finley Field isn't the only location available either. The Mt. Airy Baseball League has practice and games at Pleasant Playground located at the corner of Pleasant and Chew Avenue, Mount Airy Playground located at 7001 Germantown Ave and Leeds Campus located at Hill-Freeman School on Sedgewick and Lowber Ave.

The MABL has programs that span throughout the year. Spring baseball provides training on the basics and fundamentals for children ages 5-18. Ages 5-12 are available to play in an in-house league while ages 13-18 can play in the travel leagues. During the Summer, tournament season offers 3-5 tournaments to compete in throughout the summer months. Fall Ball is for players aged 9-15. It offers a Sunday only game package that doesn't interfere with school or other weekly obligations. Winter

baseball clinics are done indoors safely insulated from the cold weather. It offers basic training for the newcomers and more advanced training for those who have been competing all year.

Jesse Biddle. In 2010 Jesse Biddle was a first round draft pick of the Philadelphia Phillies. He played in his hometown of Philly for six years. After that he played for the Atlanta Braves, Seattle Mariners, Texas Rangers, and Cincinnati Reds. Jesse just finished the 2021 season doing a second stint with the 2021 World Series champion Atlanta Braves (there is your answer to my first question at the beginning of the article). Where is Jesse Biddle from? Philly. Where did Jesse Biddle grow up? Mount Airy. Where did Jesse start his baseball career? You got it, at the Mt. Airy Baseball League. I say that to say this. This is where it starts. This is where we can bridge that gap between people and a forgotten sport. Taking advantage of another outlet to keep our children active, healthy and off the streets out of harm's way. I don't know where baseball has gone, but it's about time we found it.

And for the record. The League MVP - Bryce Ohtani, the Home Run Leader - Tie between Salvador Perez and Vladimir Guerrero.

HOW DOES RUSSIA AND UKRAINE UNREST AFFECT US?



By RSB

Ok, so this of course would affect more than just Philadelphia or Pennsylvania- this is going to affect our country. Its important to know what's going on around the world and how it affects us. Well, there are several reasons of the Russian Ukrainian war. But the main reason is because Russia doesn't want NATO (alliance of North America and Europe countries) influence of the Ukraine, as the Ukraine wants to join NATO. Please note that Ukraine was once part of Russia, but it received independence in 1991.

Russia has slowly moving its military towards eastern Ukraine. Although Russia says they will be pulling back their guys, Russia has spent a few weeks building up its military presence near the eastern side of the

Ukraine with more than 150K troops. US could be putting on sanctions. Russia has always tried to keep Ukraine close, while NATO and the West has interest in supporting the Ukraine. However, in 2014 the Ukraine ousted its "pro-Russian" president in 2014, Russia decided to take over Crimea, a section of the Ukraine.

Energy supplies of course would be affected if a war breaks out. Russia is 2nd leading producer of oil. But did you know that Ukraine is a major agricultural export of Corn and Wheat, particularly to northern Africa and emerging markets?

The Ukraine is also a major supplier of fertilizer and potash. Remember the explosion in the warehouse in Beirut, Lebanon? It was the fertilizer coming from Georgia (not the one with the city Atlanta) using a Russian ship. Its was over 2700 tons of fertilizier that was going to Mozambique, but the shipment was conviscated. Now you see how this unrest in Eastern Europe/Western Asia will af-

fect the worlds economy.

So You think food prices are high now, let this war break out. You think gas prices are high, let this war break out. We are already seeing the affects with shortages of workers and backlogs of inventory, last thing we need is a war. Just like everything else, prices will continue to go up. Lets pray for no war. If you want to invest, please talk to your local bank or a financial advisor.

Whether your 20 or 60, a

new transfer of wealth is upon the horizon. This isn't just the USA going through a change. The whole world is... It won't be easy, but you never know until to try. Oh, and don't forget to follow me on IG or YouTube at @TheGetMoneyShow. Believe in yourself, believe in your dreams, and always remember money a'int just green. We are not financial advisors or giving out financial recommendations.



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POLITICS

STATE REP. KINSEY LAUNCHES THIRD THURSDAY TO COMBAT GUN VIOLENCE



By James Williams,
Editor in Chief
Photo Credit: Stephen Kinsey

Recently, State Rep. Stephen Kinsey held a press conference where he announced a new collaborative effort called the “Third Thursday Initiative” the goal of “Third Thursday” is to educate residents about resources to address and prevent gun violence, in Northwest Philadelphia.

The initiative will start on March 17 and will take place on the third Thursday of every month.

Here is how it works: Community organizers will work with the city’s Office of Policy and Strategic Initiatives for Criminal Justice and Public Safety and the 14th and 35th police dis-

tricts. This collaborative will travel to a targeted hotspot to pass out information to residents, to inform the citizens what resources are available to them, to help prevent crime and report crime.

Kinsey has always been in the forefront in the battle against gun violence throughout his career as a legislator. Earlier this year he held a town hall at Martin Luther King High School to address this gun violence in Northwest Philadelphia. Kinsey has shown that he has the ability to work across the aisle by forming the Bipartisan Legislative Caucus, but he also has shown that he can gather the Northwest political factions and bring everyone together for a common

cause.

Kinsey's goal for this initiative is to bring all folks together to target the gun violence that is taking place in Northwest Philadelphia.

Kinsey was joined by:

- State Rep. Isabella Fitzgerald
- State Rep. Darisha Parker
- Pastor Rob Harrison, New Journey Christian Center.
- Mama Chris from Northwest Community Coalition for Youth.
- Philadelphia Sheriff Rochelle Bilal.
- Erica Atwood, city of Philadelphia Office of Policy and Strategic Initiatives for Criminal Justice & Public Safety.
- Northwest Police In-

spector Nicholas Smith, Captain Myesha Massey, Captain Austin Fraser

- G. Lamar Stewart, district attorney’s office.
- Joey Budd, Men who Care.
- Mike Brown, Action for Justice Collective.

Kinsey said he is optimistic about this new collaborative effort.

“It is important that we have as many people as possible working together to eradicate this gun violence epidemic,” Kinsey said. “I am optimistic about working with my legislative colleagues, city officials, law enforcement, grassroots organizations and the community at large to make an impact on ending this epidem-

ic.”

State Rep. Parker is optimistic that this collaborative effort will provide solutions.

“We can’t keep waking up to yellow tape and bloodshed,” Parker said. “We need to make these collaborative efforts available to everyone who wants to help us in the fight against gun violence.”

State Rep. Fitzgerald had the following to say:

“The eradication of gun violence has to be an effort that we work on collectively,” Fitzgerald said. “We can take the good resources we have access to and work across communities to make Philadelphia a safer place.”

Keystone First proudly celebrates Black History Month 2022

We hail the 2022 theme: Black Health and Wellness. Keystone First has been caring for the community for more than 35 years with a firm dedication to promoting health equity and helping to improve the well-being of those we serve.

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CARE AND CONSISTENCY: HOW TO KEEP SHOWING UP FOR GERMANTOWN'S COMMUNITY FRIDGES



Ourchive215 (5424 Lena Street)

Germantown Community Fridge (20 W. Armat St. & 19 E. High St.)

By Germantown Info Hub
Photo Credit: GIH

Community fridges emerged in Philadelphia in 2020. Residents created the fridges and other mutual aid initiatives to make nutritious food more accessible amid the coronavirus pandemic. Germantown is home to three community fridges. *Ourchive215* operates one and *Germantown Community Fridge* runs two more.

But, not all fridges operate under the same donation guidelines or have the same holding capacity. Some can only take food, while others span beyond food needs. So, what can go into Germantown's fridges? When donating to them, what are some of the most helpful and unhelpful practices? Jane Ellis of *GCF* and Victor Jackson of *Ourchive215* outline them below.

Ourchive215 (5424 Lena Street)

What Items are Acceptable?

- Refrigerated items (fruit, milk, eggs, veggies, etc.)
- Raw meats (must go in the freezer and be properly sealed)
- Dry goods (tea, sugar, powdered milk, potatoes in a box, etc.)
- Canned goods
- Homemade meals (must be dated and labeled)
- First Aid Supplies (Band-Aids, alcohol, adhesive tape, etc.)
- Childcare products (diapers, wipes, etc.)
- Menstruation prod-

ucts

- Simple mature products (adult Depends, etc.)
- Pet food and supplies
- Masks, sanitizer
- Video games
- Etc.

Most Helpful Practices

- Sharing testimonies and experiences on social media to help the operators know what's going well and what can be improved.
- Trying to make contributing to the fridges a regular commitment.
- Donating with care and intention, rather than using this as a way to discard items you just don't want.

Unhelpful Practices

- Storing food without lids, outside of bags, and excess of food. This can contribute to unsanitary conditions and food waste.
- This location has a door to enter the insulated pantry. Please do not leave things outside of the pantry.

- Organize items when you contribute.

Ways to Continue Supporting

- Volunteering to help clean and organize the fridge.
- Contributing items to the fridge.

Victor says that while helping to run and operate the fridge can be "fulfilling," it can also be frustrating. The Lena Street Fridge is a public experiment studying mutual aid practices and a public archival project for *Ourchive215*. *Ourchive215* hopes to share their findings once they have gathered sufficient information to serve as a model for other communities looking to start a fridge. Though they are still in the early stages of the project, Victor says one of the findings is the constant trivialization of mutual aid efforts. He wants people to see community fridges as community responsibility rather than using it for instant gratification, meaning people should give the fridge what they would expect to get from their own. However, he is very encouraged when he sees how the

community shows up for the fridge by organizing for it. He also signals that future fridges should be built where people need resources, specifically East Germantown. *Germantown Community Fridge* (20 W. Armat St. & 19 E. High St.)

What Items are Acceptable?

- Refrigerated goods (fruit, milk, eggs, veggies, etc.)
- Dry goods (sugar, flour, bread, etc.)
- Canned goods
- Raw meats (must be placed in the freezer and packaged sustainably)
- Homemade meals (labeled and dated)
- Masks, sanitizer
- Child care items (diapers, wipes, etc.)
- Menstrual items
- Pet Food
- Bags (plastic, paper, and reusable)

Most Useful Practices

- Social media posts and emails updating the condition of the fridge (spills, temperature, etc.).
- Offering to pick things up or getting reimbursed for shopping.
- Reaching out for creative ways to contribute to the fridge.
- Organizing the fridge when you donate

Unhelpful Practices

- *Germantown Community Fridges* do not accept clothes.
- Leaving boxes after

you donate. Take the trash with you or break it down and put it in the provided bins near the fridge.

Ways to Continue Supporting

- Grocery runs (with reimbursement, if you choose).
- Consistent contributions.
- Taking food. It's vital that food cycles out.
- Sandwich Sign Up
- Fridge Check-In's
- Donations from bakeries and restaurants, Monetary donations through Venmo & Cash App

Jane reflects on the impact of the fridges, saying it's been amazing. She says the fact that people are still showing up and it's lasting this long shows that people are "invested." That makes her happy because the fridge cannot be a "solo project." She says, "it allows people to help in a way that they want to help, which I feel like is true mutual aid." While there are highs and lows, she says it's been "cool and fun."

It's been over one year since Germantown got its first community fridge. Currently, three stands throughout the neighborhood, and they still need your support. Here's how you can.



POLITICAL OP ED

EDUCATION FUNDING AND THIS STATE BUDGET

By Rep. Darisha Parker

It is no secret that education funding has been a sticking point in the state legislature, and folks on my side of the aisle have long advocated for changes in the funding formula to make it fair.

In addition to making it fair, increasing funding for poorer schools would potentially be a game changer for those students and their communities. Imagine children going to state-of-the-art schools -- no matter where they live -- and teachers entering buildings where they will teach for 30 years and not get a deadly ailment because those schools are no longer toxic and poisonous to humans.

I say this all the time, but I think we can all agree that our children are our future. They deserve the very best no matter what their ZIP code may be. The governor's budget proposal this year goes a long way in ensuring that they receive the best education by adding more than \$2 billion to education funds, all without raising taxes.

We can do this because we now have surplus revenue from an influx of American Rescue Plan dollars and higher than expected state revenue funds -- to the tune of \$10 billion. But my colleagues on the other side of the aisle prefer to put it aside for a rainy day. Let me be clear, it is raining now! It is time to put that money back into Pennsylvania, and our children should be first in line to benefit from that investment.

This additional money

would be a 24% funding increase statewide to help school districts like Philadelphia. Currently, Philadelphia spends just over \$13,000 per student while the rest of the state averages \$17,000 per student.

Kids who start learning early, in turn, succeed their whole lives. The budget proposal adds a 25% boost to Pre-K funding. There's no better place to provide a boost than on day one, in pre-K programs.

When we have the full backing of the state on school funding, it helps to hold the line on property taxes and ultimately eases the burden on homeowners.

The lack of resources in certain districts can be directly correlated to the lack of property tax revenue in those districts. Why, then, when we have a huge surplus statewide would we not invest it in our schools? In our children? In our future?

Education is the path forward and every child is owed that opportunity. We have the ability to make it happen this June, at state budget time. Let's make it happen and see where that investment takes us. But more importantly, where it takes our children.

Darisha Parker is the state representative for the 198th Legislative District in Philadelphia.



NICKENS AGENCY

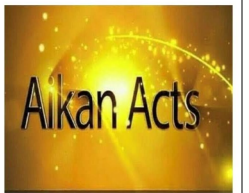
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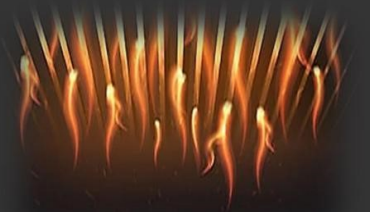
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Smoky String Beans	\$4.75
Big Mama's Baked Beans	\$4.75
Tasty Baked Mac & Cheese	\$4.75
Apple Raisin Cole Slaw	\$4.75

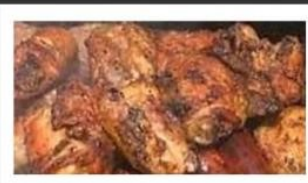
8 oz. portions
purchased separately from platter

PLATTERS

Chicken Platters	\$21.00
(1/2 of whole chicken w/(2) Sides)	
Fried Fish Platters	
3 pieces w/(2) sides	\$18.00
5 pieces w/(2) sides	\$20.00
Pork Rib Platters	\$23.00
With (2) Sides	
Beef Short Rib Platters	\$23.00
With (2) Sides	
Full Slabs	\$32.00

DESSERTS

Dessert of the Month	\$5.00
(ask about our seasonal flavor!!)	



SENATE COMMITTEE

CONSIDERS OVERSIGHT, ECONOMIC GROWTH WITH LEGALIZED ADULT-USE CANNABIS

'It is not necessary for us to go about this blindly when 18 other states have navigated the process already,' Senate Law and Justice Committee Chairperson Mike Regan, R-York

By Marley Parish
Pennsylvania Capital-Star

After wrestling with whether legalizing adult-use cannabis could curb demand on the black market earlier this month, a Republican-controlled Pennsylvania Senate committee on Monday heard from experts on how — if the state moves ahead with legalization — to regulate the product and ensure economic growth.

The two-hour Senate Law and Justice Committee hearing was one in a series of meetings to evaluate the possible benefits of legalizing adult-use recreational cannabis in Pennsylvania and draft oversight measures.

Pennsylvania's neighbors — New York, Virginia, and New Jersey — have legalized recreational cannabis. Gov. Tom Wolf, a Democrat, changed his stance on adult-use cannabis in 2019, joining Lt. Gov. John Fetterman in calling for legalization.

There also is growing support for similar legislation among Pennsylvania residents. An October 2021 poll by Franklin & Marshall College showed 60 percent support among registered voters for cannabis legalization.

Sen. Mike Regan, R-York, who chairs the Senate panel, announced plans to introduce legislation legalizing adult-use cannabis to help fund law enforcement last fall alongside state Rep. Amen Brown, D-Philadelphia. Sen. Dan Laughlin, R-Erie, became the first Senate Republican

to support adult cannabis use, introducing a legalization proposal with Sen. Sharif Street, D-Philadelphia, last year.

But it's unlikely that Pennsylvania will join its neighbors and states across the country in passing adult-use cannabis legislation. House and Senate leadership have not expressed support for the measure, though some have signaled an openness to vet a proposal.

Asked Monday during a Pennsylvania Press Club luncheon if an adult-use cannabis proposal would have any legs in the chamber, House Majority Leader Kerry Benninghoff, R-Centre, responded: "Shorter than mine."

If elected governor, Senate President Pro Tempore Jake Corman, R-Centre, told the Capital-Star in November that he would review legalization proposals. Any bill, he said, must meet "really significant standards."

Regan, who supported the state's medical marijuana program, reiterated a commitment to those standards on Monday, saying the hearings aim to develop "comprehensive" legislation that uses best practices for implementation and enforcement.

"It is not necessary for us to go about this blindly when 18 other states have navigated the process already," Regan said.

Jordan Wellington, a partner at VS Strategies, a cannabis policy firm affiliated with the Vicente Sederberg law firm, told lawmakers that

cannabis consumption and commercial activity is already happening in Pennsylvania.

"The question is really who will be engaging in that commercial activity, whether it is licensed, controlled, regulated businesses that do things like check ID and follow safety procedures or whether it is illicit operators? Wellington said.

He proposed that lawmakers consider testing procedures to ensure safe cannabis products.

"It's one of the great competitive advantages the regulated market has over the illicit market," Wellington said. "Consumers know they're consuming a safe product, and studies show that consumers will pay a price premium for a regulated product."

Brandon Nemec, government and regulatory affairs associate director for PharmaCann, Inc. — an Illinois-based cannabis company, told lawmakers that having a centralized plan for regulation from the beginning of any cannabis program would help with oversight and ensure stronger policies.

Jesse Alderman, a partner and co-chair at Foley Hoag LLP, a Boston-headquartered cannabis law firm, urged lawmakers to consider "clear statutory mechanisms and clear deadlines" to enable existing medical marijuana cardholders to obtain approval to operate at dual permittees.

This could allow Pennsylvania to impose conversation

fees immediately while bringing on new applicants through a separate program, Alderman suggested.

Nemec promoted the potential for "new and sustained and meaningful" revenue if Pennsylvania legalizes adult-use cannabis.

"However, the commonwealth should be mindful of setting an adult-use tax rate that will allow it to compete with the illicit market and bring adult-use consumers into the regulated market as quickly and effectively as possible," Nemec said.

Citing Michigan as an example, Nemec told lawmakers that the state's combined effective tax rate is 16 percent, with a 10 percent cannabis excise tax and 6 percent regular sales tax. Last year, Michigan reported more than \$1.3 billion in adult-use sales and generated approximately \$250 million in tax revenue, Nemec said.

He said that the administration of taxes is most easily applied by the state and operators, meaning that the tax rate is applied at the point of retail.

Nemec added that there are opportunities for workplace development, referencing a partnership in Illinois with local community colleges with formalized training programs through trade groups or schools.

"The commonwealth has the opportunity that if it does decide to transition to adult-use, tens of thousands of new, good-paying, living-wage jobs are going to have to be created in order

to sustain a market the size of Pennsylvania's," Nemec said. "And at the outset of the program, it would be very beneficial if the commonwealth considered setting up private-public partnerships."

Street also recognized opportunities for Pennsylvania farmers to get involved with cannabis growth. He added that there's a chance for dealers currently working in the illicit market to shift toward a legal cannabis program.

"I want the kid who's been asked 100 times how he can score some illegal weed — I'd like him to be able to have the opportunity to work in a dispensary or join one of your companies as well," he added.

Though legalizing recreational cannabis is still up for debate in the General Assembly, some lawmakers have different ideas on spending any additional revenue generated from cannabis sales.

Sen. James Brewster, D-Allegheny, suggested using the money — even a portion of the funds — to address addiction in Pennsylvania.

"No matter what we've tried to do, we have not made a dent in that," Brewster said.

NATIONAL REPORT CARD GIVES PA. A C-PLUS FOR ITS MEDICAL MARIJUANA LAW

REP. CHRIS RABB, IS OFFERING BILLS HE SAYS WOULD HELP CLOSE THE GAPS



John Micek,
Pennsylvania Capital-Star
Photo Credit: Chris Rabb

A new, nationwide report card gives Pennsylvania a C-plus for the strength of its six-year-old medical marijuana law, recommending a raft of changes and improvements as the ranks of the state's eligible patients continues to grow. The report, compiled by the California-based advocacy group Americans for Safe Access, notes that the state has gained 46,000 new pa-

tients since its last report card in 2020, an increase of 15 percent. The commonwealth is now one of five states with more than 300,000 eligible medical marijuana patients, according to the new report card. As such, policymakers should be concentrating both on increasing access in a state with ratio of 2,403 patients for every retail location. Among them, allowing patients to grow a small number of plants at home for their own use. Bipartisan legislation now

before the state Senate would do just that. The bill's sponsors, Sens. Sharif Street, D-Philadelphia, and Dan Laughlin, R-Erie, argue that allowing home-grow, as advocates refer to it, will "help ease the cost and accessibility burdens for this important medicine."

The proposal, which is one of several now before the Senate Law & Justice Committee, would "go a long way towards helping everyday Pennsylvanians meet their health needs and ensuring everyone is treated equitably and fairly under [the state's medical marijuana law]."

Earlier this month, the Senate panel, chaired by Sen. Mike Regan, R-York, held the first legislative hearing on legal, adult-use cannabis. Regan, a former U.S. marshal, is sponsoring the bill in the upper chamber.

On the House's side of the Capitol, state Rep. Chris Rabb, D-Philadelphia, one of the lower chamber's most high-profile progressives, said Wednesday that he's

backing a number of bills that would help close some of the gaps highlighted by the new report card. The state scored particularly poorly on two key metrics in the report card, netting an 80/100 on patients' rights and civil protections and a 43/100 on questions of health and social equity, such as the ease of access in underserved communities. The bills Rabb is sponsoring would, among other things:

- Prohibit employers from firing a worker if they fail a drug test because of medically prescribed cannabis.
- Protect patients from eviction for possessing and consuming their prescribed medical cannabis.
- Remove DUI penalties for medical cannabis users. According to Rabb, the 34 states that permit some degree of cannabis use already have updated their respective laws. Pennsylvania, which takes a ze-

ro-tolerance approach, has not, Rabb said in a statement released by his office.

Rabb, along with several House colleagues, is a co-sponsor of a non-binding resolution calling for the federal government to remove cannabis from its list of addictive and dangerous substances.

Rabb, who also is a medical cannabis patient, said the state must "bolster our medical cannabis program to further protect the hundreds of thousands of Pennsylvanians who, in consultation with their physicians, have become legal consumers of this medication."

As a patient/consumer, **Rabb** added that he's "thankful that Pennsylvania has legalized use of this plant for medicinal purposes. I also strongly support legalizing adult-use cannabis in a responsible and equitable manner."

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EDUCATION

THREE CONSOLIDATING STATE SCHOOLS TO BECOME 'COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA'



By Marley Parish
Pennsylvania Capital-Star

Three consolidating Pennsylvania state universities have a new name as they become a northeastern regional campus for students enrolling this year.

The merging schools — Bloomsburg, Mansfield, and Lock Haven universities — will form Commonwealth

University of Pennsylvania, following unanimous approval from the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education Board of Governors on Wednesday.

The new title still needs approval from the Middle States Commission on Higher Education, which handles college and university accreditation.

“This is tremendously excit-

ing work, but it’s also super hard work,” State System Chancellor Daniel Greenstein said. “And it’s taking a lot of effort and application to kind of realize a new vision for the future of our students.”

It’s the latest step in consolidating six PASSHE schools into two regional campuses to address rising tuition costs and sagging enrollment across the education system. The merger also includes California, Clarion, and Edinboro universities, which were renamed Pennsylvania Western University last fall.

Each school will retain its identity and reflect the surrounding community, but Commonwealth University of Pennsylvania will help identify the regional campus. Bloomsburg University President Bashar Hanna,

who helped lead rebranding efforts, said each school will retain its mascot.

“We will preserve the founding principles of each campus and continue to provide vibrant, on-campus student experiences while serving as pillars of our three communities,” Hanna said. “The power of three will create a higher education experience — the likes of which is not possible without integration.”

With a phased implementation process, consolidation will begin in 2022-23. Campuses will have one president and a leadership team.

“This is a bold investment in the people and communities of Pennsylvania,” Hanna said. “We are positioning ourselves for growth, increasing access to students across the commonwealth,

and meeting the economic and workforce needs across our regions, our state, and beyond.”

Since students will be attending classes across each campus, online learning and hybrid instruction models are likely, also resulting in layoffs. Hanna added that schools also will utilize satellite teaching sites.

“This work is ongoing and will continue for years to come,” Hanna added. “There will be growing pains along the way, and not everyone will agree with every direction or decision taken as we come together. We are better for having such diversity of thought and opinion.”

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POLITICS

PLAN TO END PENNSYLVANIA'S STATE-RUN LIQUOR STORE MONOPOLY GETS SOME OPPOSITION IN PHILADELPHIA

By Tom McDonald,
WHYY

An effort to eliminate Pennsylvania's state-run liquor monopoly through a constitutional amendment is already running into roadblocks, even before the question is on the ballot. State Rep. Natalie Mihalek, a Republican from Allegheny County, is preparing a constitutional amendment to privatize the state's liquor system. Her belief is that the convenience of private operation of liquor sales far outweighs the state monopoly that has been the way Pennsylvania has handled liquor sales for decades. Pennsylvania is one of only two states that has a state-run liquor system and there have been numerous attempts to change that, including as recently as 2015 when a bill made it to Governor Tom Wolf's desk before being rejected. State Senators Anthony Williams and Tina Tartaglione, both Democrats,

went to a liquor store in Philadelphia's Gray's Ferry neighborhood Tuesday morning to speak out against the proposal along with members of the union that represents the workers in the facilities, who number about 5,000 statewide.

Senator Williams said the change could put thousands of people out of good-paying jobs with benefits and pensions, and he plans to fight the proposal. He questioned the reasons for ending the liquor monopoly when it returned over \$800 million in profits in the past fiscal year to the state. "There's not one single department or unit of government that has such a prosperous return on investment, not one," Williams said. "It hires and employs over 5,000 Pennsylvanians that receive pensions, benefits, and the privilege of their salary being protected." Mihalek said the goal of her constitutional amendment is

to let the people of the state decide what is best for them. She refuted the \$800 million number, saying the majority of the money comes from sales tax and a liquor tax that would not change if the sales were transferred to private operators. It's more like \$200 million, said Mihalek, which she believes will be made up from the taxes on increased sales from more stores that would arise from private ownership.

Denise Brown is a single mother who put her son through college working in state liquor stores in the Philadelphia region. She joined Williams and spoke out about the importance of the security that a union job brings. She said she's afraid if the government ends the Liquor Control Board monopoly on sales, she and many of her co-workers would never be able to find a similar job with equal wages and benefits. Senator Tartaglione said the

state-run liquor stores give Pennsylvania more control to prevent underage liquor sales and have stores even in areas that lose money to provide a service to the public. She said that's something that would never happen if private enterprises ran the operation. She says the constitutional amendment is a move by Republicans trying to circumvent the legislature's ability to do their job by taking the question directly to the voters.

Wendell Young IV is the head of United Food and Commercial Workers Local 1776, which represents liquor store employees. He said the state shouldn't abolish a program that has so many people in good-paying jobs and that makes a big profit. He said if a business in Pennsylvania was preparing to cut 5,000 jobs, there would be state subsidies provided to keep those employees working. He called the move "disrespectful to

the voters of Pennsylvania." Young believes if the constitutional amendment were to pass it would create chaos, because the change would have to be completed in 18 months. Mihalek said previous incarnations of legislation could be used as a guide to make for a smooth transition and with a timetable established, people would be able to work toward the change with a definitive deadline. In order for the constitutional amendment to be approved, the State House and Senate would have to approve the change in two successive sessions. Only then would it go to the voters for a final decision.

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