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GOVERNMENT RELATIONS UPDATE

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Gov. Wolf Proposes New Investments to Build Successful Future for Pennsylvania Families

After transforming the state's budget from a severe shortfall to a record surplus over seven years, Governor Tom Wolf outlined his vision for a generational investment in education and to raise wages, attract innovative industries and create good jobs that will make Pennsylvania an even better place to live and work.

While this is his final budget speech before the General Assembly, Governor Wolf said he plans to spend every day continuing to fight for Pennsylvanians and deliver key budget priorities that will have long-lasting impacts on our commonwealth and its citizens.

"These are days of opportunity for our commonwealth," said Gov. Wolf. "That's because, at long last, our fiscal house is in order. Over the past seven years, we've turned a \$2-3 billion structural budget deficit into a \$2-3 billion budget surplus. We've built our Rainy Day Fund to more than \$2.8 billion—more than 12,000 times what it was when I took office."

Thanks to Governor Wolf's commitment to fiscal responsibility prior to and despite federal funding for pandemic relief, Pennsylvania has forged a new path forward. Governor Wolf will be the first

governor since Dick Thornburgh, who left office in 1987, to turn over a budget surplus to his successor.

"We are no longer digging out of a hole. We're ready to build. And this year's budget does exactly that, by making new investments that will build a brighter future for Pennsylvania families," Gov. Wolf said.

The governor delivered his annual budget address to a joint session of the House and Senate.

Continuing to Invest in Students and Good Jobs

Governor Wolf has kept his promise to provide historic support of public education and this budget builds on that strong foundation with an additional \$1.9 billion to benefit students from pre-k through college.

Early Education

Governor Wolf understands children in high-quality pre-K programs do better in school, are more likely to graduate, and earn more throughout their lives compared to kids without early learning programs. Over seven years, the number of young children in Pre-K Counts and Head Start has more than doubled and the governor is proposing additional investments so more young learners can start kindergarten ready to thrive.

- \$60 million increase for Pre-K Counts allowing 2,308 more young children to attend early education.

- \$10 million increase for the Head Start Supplemental Assistance Program to assist with rising costs.

Generational Investments in K-12 Schools

During his term, Gov. Wolf has reversed funding cuts and made historic investments of nearly \$1.4 billion in public K-12 education. After a record \$416 million increase last year, the governor is proposing a generational investment of \$1.75 billion in our schools.

- \$1.25 billion in basic education funding, bringing the total going through the Fair Funding Formula to more than \$2 billion, or 26.5 percent of state funding.
- \$300 million for the groundbreaking Level Up initiative launched last year to support the 100 most underfunded schools.
- \$200 million increase for Special Education.
- \$373 million in savings through commonsense charter school accountability reform. The governor’s plan ensures taxpayers do not overpay for cyber charter schools and special education at charter schools, allowing school districts to reinvest in students, teachers, and learning.

“We can afford to invest a whole lot more in the Fair Funding Formula without raising one penny in state taxes, and we can afford to do it without asking any school district, anywhere in Pennsylvania, to sacrifice one penny in state funding,” said Gov. Wolf. “Last year, we made a historic investment in our schools. This year, we have an opportunity to build on that momentum and make a generational difference for students all across the commonwealth.”

Continuing to Transform Higher Education

The governor is proposing to continue the transformation of higher education so students can succeed without crushing student loan debt.

- \$200 million for the Nellie Bly Tuition Program for students attending a PA State System of Higher Education (PASSHE) university or community college so more people

can earn a degree with less debt and encourage young people to remain in Pennsylvania.

- \$150 million in one-time federal ARPA funds for the PASSHE to support System Redesign, enhance student success, freeze tuition, and increase student aid to make college more affordable.
- \$125 million additional investment for higher education institutions including a \$75 million increase in General Funds for PASSHE.

Making Pennsylvania the Best Place for Workers and Businesses

As the 18th largest economy in the world, Pennsylvania is a destination for workers and entrepreneurs. This budget continues to invest in job training that creates highly skilled workers to attract start-ups and well-established businesses to make the commonwealth an economic force for decades to come.

- Increasing the minimum wage to \$12 per hour on July 1, 2022, with annual increases of \$0.50 until reaching \$15 in 2028, with an estimated 1.5 million people getting a boost in pay.
- Reducing the corporate net income tax rate from 9.99 percent, among the highest in the nation, with a desire to show a path to 4.99 percent as quickly as possible to make Pennsylvania more competitive and expanding the tax base to level the playing field for all businesses.
- \$30 million in funding for two new child care options for state employees.
- \$1.5 million increase for Industrial Resource Centers (IRC) to help manufacturers respond to changing markets and new technology and remain competitive.
- \$2.35 million for Invent Penn State to help entrepreneurs turn ideas into commercial products and services.
- \$1.5 million increase for the PREP Network to help small businesses and higher education institutions partner to benefit students and entrepreneurs.
- \$8 million for job training through the Workforce and Economic Development Network of Pennsylvania (WEDnetPA), which has helped more than 2,000 companies train nearly 1.3 million Pennsylvanians.

- \$2 million increase to address food insecurity and ensure more families have healthy meals through the Pennsylvania Agricultural Surplus System (PASS).

Keeping Pennsylvanians Safe through Criminal Justice Reform

Throughout his administration, Gov. Wolf has prioritized criminal justice reforms that make our justice system more just while keeping Pennsylvanians safer. Gov. Wolf’s proposal builds on those successful criminal justice reforms to further protect Pennsylvanians.

“We’ve made immense strides in reforming our criminal justice system and making our communities,” said Gov. Wolf. “But we still have a long way to go to. This is an opportunity for us to build on our hard work and make transformational changes to promote justice and safety across Pennsylvania.”

Improving Public Safety

Gov. Wolf has invested more than \$50 million in gun violence reduction and prevention, furthered police reform by requiring background checks for law enforcement applicants and mental health evaluations for officers, and protected victims of abuse by preventing domestic abusers from possessing guns. This budget builds on those reforms to make our communities safer for all Pennsylvanians.

- \$35 million in grants and technical assistance to support community-led gun violence prevention efforts.
- \$141 million increase in state General Funds to support Pennsylvania State Police to reduce reliance on the Motor License Fund.
- \$7.7 million to provide funding for technology necessary to increase public and law enforcement officer safety such as mobile video recorders and body worn cameras.

Establishing Pretrial Reforms

Gov. Wolf believes that everyone has a right to adequate legal representation, a fair trial and not to be held in prison based solely on inability

to pay fees. Research shows that less time spent in jail pretrial lowers the chances of committing another crime. The inability to pay bail leads to increases in the likelihood of conviction, increased guilty pleas, higher average court costs, and longer incarceration sentences. This proposal will help Pennsylvania implement a best practices model for bail and pretrial services.

- \$1 million to create an Indigent Defense Fund.
- Reforming monetary cash bail reform to promote equity across Pennsylvania counties, reduce the disproportionate impact on minorities in the criminal justice system, and reduce the total number of indigent defendants held in jail pretrial.

Supporting Reentry and Reducing Recidivism

Gov. Wolf has reduced the number of people incarcerated in state correctional facilities by 11,000 while simultaneously lowering the crime rate, enacted a first-of-its-kind Clean Slate Law to automatically seal certain types of criminal records and help reduce stigma against Pennsylvanians who have interacted with the criminal justice system, and signed into law Justice Reinvestment Initiative bills to make the state’s justice system fairer while keeping communities safe.

Gov. Wolf’s budget proposal builds on that work to further improve reentry supports and reduce recidivism. Research shows that supervising people who are at low risk of reoffending increases their likelihood of recidivism. Once an individual has served their sentence and is released back to the community, it is critical to ensure that they have the necessary supports to succeed in the community.

- Reforming probation to promote proper services for individuals while providing necessary accountability for a limited period of time.
- \$425,000 for increased staffing resources to provide additional technical assistance to county juvenile probation offices and improve consistency between counties.
- \$1 million to make reentry services available at the local level for women to give them the best opportunity to start fresh and reduce recidivism.

- \$7 million in state funds for the Department of Human Services to open a wing of beds for elderly inmates leaving the state correctional facilities with complex medical or behavioral health needs, to provide transitional support for medical release.
- Expanding Clean Slate to provide comprehensive reform and ensure true progress in eliminating the stigma of a conviction

Protecting the Most Vulnerable

Gov. Wolf’s 2022-23 budget reaffirms the commonwealth’s long history as a leader in caring for its most vulnerable citizens, including children, seniors, veterans, individuals with mental health concerns, and individuals with intellectual disabilities.

Supporting Health and Quality of Life for Vulnerable Populations

Gov. Wolf believes that every Pennsylvanian deserves an opportunity to thrive. In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, it has never been more important for Pennsylvania to invest in initiatives that provide support for vulnerable Pennsylvanians.

- \$91.25 million increase to Medical Assistance rates for skilled nursing facility providers and \$14 million for state veterans’ homes to help long-term care providers hire staff to comply with new regulations that call for increased staffing ratios to promote improved care for residents and drive increased funding to the bedside.
- \$50 million to increase the supplementary payments rates for personal care homes to invest in supportive services and caregivers.
- \$36.6 million increase in county mental health base funds to support efforts to provide critical behavioral health services.
- \$14.3 million increase to the minimum Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefit for low-income older adults and adults with disabilities.

Using American Rescue Plan Act Dollars to Support Pennsylvanians

Last week, Gov. Wolf announced his **plan** <https://www.governor.pa.gov/newsroom/gov-wolf-announces-1-7-billion-plan-to-secure-a-brighter-pennsylvania-for-generations/> to spend billions of dollars of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding that the federal government gave Pennsylvania to help Pennsylvanians weather the COVID-19 pandemic.

“We can’t keep sitting on this money – not when Pennsylvanians are hurting,” said Gov. Wolf. “This isn’t an abstract issue – people are hurting, and we have the resources to help, so we must take action to help. It’s imperative that we drive out funding now to help the Pennsylvanians who need it.”

Gov. Wolf’s previously announced plan for these ARPA funds builds on the initiatives included in his budget to further support vulnerable populations, help Pennsylvania continue its recovery from the pandemic and lay the foundation for a brighter future.

- \$500 million to create the PA Opportunity Program to provide relief to workers and families from the high cost of childcare and household expenses and support opportunities to complete a degree, credential, or license to strengthen skills and increase income—all leading to a better quality of life.
- \$225 million to help 11,000 small businesses through the COVID Relief Statewide Small Business Assistance Program. The grants will help small businesses to stabilize and reopen.
- \$204 million to increase property tax relief through the existing Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program.
- \$325 million to support health care workers in Pennsylvania.
- \$450 million to invest in vital conservation, recreation, preservation, and community revitalization projects and address the threat of climate change.

Pennsylvanians can find out more about Governor Wolf’s budget at <https://www.budget.pa.gov/Pages/default.aspx>

Source: Governor Wolf’s Press Office, 2/8/2022

Pennsylvania House Republican Leaders: Democrats' Spending Proposal Not a Serious Plan to Move Pennsylvania Forward

Speaker of the House Bryan Cutler (R-Lancaster), House Majority Leader Kerry Benninghoff (R-Centre/Mifflin) and House Appropriations Committee Majority Chairman Stan Saylor (R-York) issued the following statements on Gov. Tom Wolf's final spending plan address:

Speaker Cutler:

"Gov. Wolf may see today's address as a coronation of his time in office, but for the eighth straight year, it falls on the Legislature to rein in calls to dramatically increase state spending.

"Our caucus has consistently supported data-driven, targeted investments to move our Commonwealth forward as we once again recognize this budget is not about the man making the requests, but about the people who will ultimately have to pay the bill."

Leader Benninghoff:

"The irresponsible plan proposed today increases spending by \$17 million per day. If I were not actually here to see it, I would not believe such a terrible idea would actually be put forward by this governor.

"We literally cannot afford to bring Washington, D.C.-style runaway spending policies to Pennsylvania. Unfortunately, that is exactly what Pennsylvanians were offered from Gov. Wolf today - more of the same Biden-style Build Back Broke policies that have brought this country record inflation, higher gas prices and significant labor shortages.

"After years of hard work by Republicans in this General Assembly to ensure these kinds of

nonsensical proposals from the administration do not become law, it is surprising Gov. Wolf still just does not get it."

Chairman Saylor:

"When we enacted the current year budget in June, there was widespread agreement that we needed to take a multi-year approach to manage our state finances over the next several years. Now the governor seems to have drifted off into a fiscal fantasy land where there is zero concern for our financial footing after he is gone. The governor's massive spending spree proposed today will squander the entirety of our reserves and leave the next governor with massive budget deficits, with no reserves to combat it, and would guarantee the need to raise taxes."

Source: House Republican Caucus Press Release, 2/8/2022

Senate Republican Leaders: Governor's Budget Less About Pennsylvania, More About Legacy

Gov. Wolf's budget increases spending by more than \$4.5 billion, leading to higher taxes and energy costs.

Republican leaders in the Senate cautioned Pennsylvanians that they would be on the hook to pay for Gov. Tom Wolf's legacy if the recommendations outlined in today's State Budget Address are implemented.

Senate President Pro Tempore Jake Corman (R-Bellefonte), Senate Majority Leader Kim Ward (R-Westmoreland), and Senate Appropriations Committee Chair Pat Browne (R-Lehigh) said the governor's plan to increase spending by more than \$4.5 billion would come at the expense of Pennsylvania's long-term financial security. The money Wolf is proposing to spend on one-time expenses could be better spent over the next several years to prevent massive tax increases. Furthermore, Gov. Wolf's massive spending plan

comes at a time when we are trying to help Pennsylvania business owners get back on their feet, while also working to return the economic and personal freedoms to Pennsylvania residents that were limited with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Senate President Pro Tempore Jake Corman (R-Bellefonte):

“Pennsylvanians will not forget how terribly the Wolf Administration mismanaged the COVID-19 pandemic. Now he is trying to buy back the support of alienated voters by using money that we already planned to invest in the health, safety and prosperity of our citizens in the years ahead. Instead of caving in to Gov. Wolf’s transparent attempt to distract from his past failures, we will work to pass a realistic and responsible budget that meets the core needs of our communities and puts people first.”

Senate Majority Leader Kim Ward (R-Westmoreland):

“It’s important that we help Pennsylvanians move beyond the financial strains we have all felt the last couple of years due to the pandemic, and work toward helping our businesses and our families to move forward. Shaking off the negative economic impacts is easier said than done. Every action that affects our economy and that we take as a government should be to help, not hinder. A spending increase of \$4.5 billion will not be helpful. It will only intensify the personal financial pressures on Pennsylvanians in the form of higher taxes, energy prices, and the overall economic conditions confronting our nation including inflation and supply chain disruptions. Spending billions right now may sound appealing, but that can’t be done in a vacuum. Pennsylvanians will pay for that. Pennsylvania’s budget requires discipline that continues to move the Commonwealth towards a path of economic stability and success, not a budget that saddles our families with legacy payments. This budget kind of reminds me of Wimpy from the Popeye cartoon – ‘I will gladly pay you Tuesday for a hamburger today.’ It doesn’t work.”

Senate Appropriations Committee Chair Pat Browne (R-Lehigh):

“While this year’s revenues continue to outpace estimates, the long-term financial picture for the Commonwealth remains uncertain. The Governor’s revenue and spending projections over the next several years are unrealistic, do not align with traditional rates of growth and will make worse our existing structural imbalance. Using more traditional growth rates that are in line with those used by the Commonwealth’s Independent Fiscal Office, the Commonwealth will see a negative balance of \$13 billion by FY 2026-27 if the Governor’s spending becomes law. Given those concerns, the Governor’s proposal for major increases in spending is very troubling. If enacted, his proposal will require large tax increases to Pennsylvania taxpayers and job creators to meet the level of spending the Governor proposes.”

Source: Senate Republican Caucus, 2/8/2022

PA’s Proposed Budget has Opportunities for Cleaner Rivers and Streams

The Chesapeake Bay Foundation issued the following statement from Pennsylvania Executive Director Shannon Gority, in response to Governor Tom Wolf’s \$43.7 billion General Fund budget proposal for fiscal year 2022-23. Ms. Gority said:

“Governor Wolf’s proposal to increase funding for the Department of Environmental Protection, Department of Agriculture, and Department of Conservation and Natural Resources is a positive step toward protecting and restoring water quality in Pennsylvania.

“Unfortunately, the Commonwealth lags significantly behind in meeting its pollution reduction commitments and it remains unclear how the state will close the over \$320 million annual shortfall in investments needed to achieve its Clean Water Blueprint.

“With the Governor’s proposal to spend over \$13 billion in federal funds from the American Rescue Plan and Infrastructure Investment and Jobs

Act, the state would still retain nearly \$3 billion in the Rainy Day Fund.

“The state legislature can make the choice to invest those federal dollars into the Agricultural Conservation Assistance Program, Clean Streams Fund, and Growing Greener. It is critical support for the many boots on the ground, landowners, and communities working hard every day to protect and restore local rivers and streams.

“In his budget address, Governor Wolf said, ‘Let’s take advantage of the opportunity before us.’

“Clean water is critical to the health, economic wellbeing, and quality of life of all Pennsylvanians and a lot of work lies ahead. It is time our Commonwealth seizes its opportunities to create a legacy of clean water for future generations.”

Source: CBF Press Release, 2/8/2022

Reducing the Corporate Net Income Tax is a Win for Pennsylvania

Businesses Business leaders caution against tying a rate reduction to expanded government overreach

The PA Chamber of Business and Industry, The Chamber of Commerce for Greater Philadelphia, and The Greater Pittsburgh Chamber of Commerce, an affiliate of the Allegheny Conference, today applauded Gov. Tom Wolf's call to reduce the state's Corporate Net Income Tax rate, our organizations' top policy priority. The business community has long advocated for such a reduction to improve the state's overall competitiveness.

Few issues draw as much attention as a state's tax climate for companies seeking to locate or expand operations. At 9.99 percent, Pennsylvania has the unfortunate distinction of having the country's second-highest Corporate Net Income tax. The state's disproportionately high CNI serves as a major red flag to potential investors and puts the Commonwealth at a distinct disadvantage as

businesses look to other pro-growth states to open or expand operations.

While a reduction to the CNI rate has been long overdue, the chamber leaders express concern with the proposal's subjective expansion of the state's taxing authority, citing the need for clear, predictable standards for employers to follow.

"Pennsylvania continues to lose new business prospects and our best and brightest to other states," said PA Chamber President and CEO Gene Barr. "Our excessively high CNI rate puts the state at a competitive disadvantage when it comes to attracting and retaining jobs and impedes investment and economic growth. The governor's proposal to reduce state's CNI is a positive step to improving the Commonwealth's overall business climate and will help to 'Propel PA Forward.' As the budget process moves forward, we encourage lawmakers to keep a reduction in the CNI rate that has clear and concise parameters for the state and businesses to follow, at the forefront of negotiations."

Matt Smith, president of the Greater Pittsburgh Chamber of Commerce, reinforced that "as regions look to recover and thrive in a post-pandemic world, we need, now more than ever, to ensure that the Commonwealth is competitively positioned to retain and recruit the businesses and talent needed to prosper. Through a meaningful reduction of Pennsylvania's CNI rate, there is an opportunity to harness the Commonwealth's fullest potential by making it more attractive to business investment, creating good-paying jobs, and contributing to the community vibrancy and opportunity that are essential to fueling talent attraction and growing our population."

"High corporate net income taxes slows employment growth, reduces wages, and is a barrier to attracting new enterprises," said Rob Wonderling, president and CEO of the Chamber of Commerce for Greater Philadelphia. "We applaud Governor Wolf for recommending a substantive reduction in the CNI and look forward to working with his administration and our legislative leaders in Harrisburg on passing real and meaningful tax reform legislation this session."

As the 2022 budget process begins in earnest, the three chambers urge lawmakers to include this much-needed reduction in the CNI rate and prioritize policies that will promote economic growth.

Source: PA Chamber Press Release, 2/8/2022

Gov. Wolf Announces \$244.9 Million Bipartisan Infrastructure Law Investment to Cleanup Pennsylvania's Abandoned Mine Lands

On February 7, 2022, Governor Tom Wolf announced that Pennsylvania has been awarded \$244.9 million from President Joe Biden's Bipartisan Infrastructure Law to clean up abandoned mines across the commonwealth.

"We've long needed a solution to accelerate work to address the environmental and public health concerns of our legacy energy development, I'm pleased that the Biden Administration shares my commitment to reclaiming Pennsylvania's abandoned mine-land for productive use," said Wolf. "This bipartisan investment will address the dangers of abandoned mines while simultaneously supporting new, good-paying jobs, economic recovery, and community revitalization."

While Pennsylvania's more than 5,000 abandoned mines memorialize a period of great economic and industrial growth in the state and country, they're now scars to Pennsylvania's landscape with environmental and safety hazards. In addition to being at risk for fires, these abandoned mines have dangerous highwalls and open shafts and are sources for both water and air pollution.

The Wolf Administration looks forward to working with the Department of the Interior to put the resources announced today to work to enhance the state's Abandoned Mine Reclamation Program and returning abandoned mine-land to productive

use for things like recreation, farming, or clean energy production.

Today's \$244.9 million announcement is a small piece of the nearly \$4 billion Pennsylvania is estimated to receive over the next 15 years to address contamination and pollution caused by its coal mining legacy.

Source: Governor Wolf's Press Office, 2/7/2022

Senate Passes Ward Legislation Updating Notary Signature Rules

On February 7, 2022, the Senate approved legislation that modernizes signature rules for notaries public, Sen. Judy Ward announced (R-30).

Senate Bill 807, sponsored by Ward, eliminates the 50-cent registration fee for an official notary public signature and adds the office of the recorder of deeds to the signature requirements.

In addition, the measure provides for electronic transfer of the notary's signature to the appropriate prothonotary office. A hard copy of the signature will be provided when an electronic transfer is not feasible.

"I am pleased that my legislation modernizing the state's notary public law has passed the Senate," says Senator Judy Ward. "This bill provides commonsense, good government reforms to help local governments operate more effectively and efficiently for the taxpayer."

The legislation now moves to the House of Representatives for consideration.

Senate Bill 807 can be viewed at <https://www.legis.state.pa.us/cfdocs/billInfo/billInfo.cfm?sYear=2021&sInd=0&body=S&type=B&bn=0807>.

Source: Senator Judy Ward Press Release, 2/7/2022

Struzzi Amendment Creates New Energy Opportunities and Sustains Pennsylvania's Economic Future

Having already authored bipartisan legislation that would require the General Assembly to approve of Pennsylvania being enrolled in the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative, (RGGI), state Rep. Jim Struzzi (R-Indiana) has successfully amended his own House Bill 637 to further address the Commonwealth's energy needs.

Struzzi issued the following statement after his amended bill was passed by the House Appropriations Committee on a party-line vote:

“Part of my original intent with **House Bill 637** <https://www.legis.state.pa.us/cfdocs/billInfo/billInfo.cfm?sYear=2021&sInd=0&body=h&type=b&bn=337> was to recognize RGGI's threat to a diversified energy portfolio. I've now crafted an amendment that makes a good bill better through creation of the Energy Sustainability and Investment Act. In addition to addressing RGGI's damaging impact on Pennsylvanians, my legislation recognizes the need for investment in the future of areas like Indiana County that are feeling the effects of market-driven pressures on fossil-fuel based energy.

“House Bill 637 as amended would still protect the jobs created by existing energy producers and require RGGI to face a vote by the General Assembly. It now calls for a significant state investment in alternative carbon reduction measures that would take steps toward a future that is both economically and environmentally sound. The Energy Sustainability and Investment Act would access \$250 million from the COVID-19 Response Restricted Account for the following uses:

- \$125,000,000 for development of carbon dioxide and methane reduction technologies for electric generation and manufacturing, securing federal funds for a regional hydrogen hub and battery storage and methane abatement projects from plugging abandoned natural gas wells.

- \$62,500,000 for **sewer and water infrastructure and storm water mitigation projects**, including riparian planting for carbon dioxide reduction.
- \$62,500,000 for assisting workers and communities impacted by electric generation or manufacturing plant closures.

“House Bill 637 now encourages further exploration and diversification of our future energy needs. It answers questions about how we make reasonable changes that protect both our local economies and our environment.

“Nationally, Pennsylvania is the third-largest electricity generation producer and the largest exporter of electricity. Our goal should be to maintain that prominent position. In doing so, preparing for Pennsylvania's future energy is a two-fold process. It requires not only anticipating and developing technologies that will be available, but also accounting for existing energy sources that must be part of our economy. House Bill 637 does that.”

Source: Rep. Jim Struzzi Press Release, 2/10/2022

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