



Winter  
2024

# DANIELLE FRIEL <sup>155</sup> OTTEN

## PA STATE REPRESENTATIVE

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## DEAR NEIGHBOR,

As your state representative, my role is to ensure that the 155th Legislative District is represented in the lawmaking process in Harrisburg. Our new legislative maps have now been in effect for just over a year, and I have been excited to welcome and get to know our neighbors in Downingtown Borough, Wallace Township, and Caln Township Precinct 4. My team and I have made it a priority to meet with members of our community from every part of the district and find out what issues matter most to you.

I am always mindful that the votes and actions my colleagues and I take in Harrisburg affect the everyday lives of our constituents at home. The work I do would not be possible without our vocal and active community. Your input and involvement ensure that the interests of the 155th District are well represented.

While my focus is on being the best possible legislator for our district, my staff strives to be the best at delivering constituent services. We have responded to thousands of emails, letters, and phone calls; helped hundreds of constituents with unemployment claims; and provided assistance with tax rebates, state forms, and questions and concerns involving state offices, agencies, and public utilities.

Should you need to contact us regarding any state-related issue, please email, call, or stop by our district office. I also encourage you to share your views on state legislative matters that are important to you. We strive to provide a welcoming, informative, and helpful experience to every constituent.

## UPDATES FROM HARRISBURG AND HOME

### How I Voted

While state legislators' votes are always public record, the reasons behind those votes may not always be clear. For the past two legislative sessions, I have maintained a "How I Voted" section on my website with the goal of keeping constituents as informed as possible about the bills that come before the House, my positions on those bills, and why I voted the way I did. We strive to update this page as quickly as possible following the end of each session week to make it easy for you to stay up to date.

Look for the "How I Voted" tab at the top right-hand corner of my website, RepDanielle.com.

I have had the honor of representing the 155th Legislative District since 2019, and this past year has been one of the most historic the PA House has ever seen. With a slim majority for the first time in more than a decade, House Democrats were united in their efforts to elect my friend and colleague Representative Joanna McClinton as the first woman and the second person of color to serve as Speaker of the House.

This year, we advanced a diverse and bipartisan agenda that lifts up the voices of the people of Pennsylvania. In less than one year in the majority, House Democrats have delivered on our promise to prioritize the issues Pennsylvanians care about by passing more than 200 bills, many with bipartisan support, focusing on a variety of critical issues that will improve lives for Pennsylvanians.

Read on for more about what I've been working on in Harrisburg and at home, including:

- Help for seniors and working families: Expanded Property Tax/Rent Rebate and Child & Dependent Care Tax Credit coming in 2024!
- Addressing our teacher shortage and supporting student teachers in Pennsylvania.
- Working to protect the health and safety of Pennsylvanians and our environment.
- How my office can help you navigate state government services.
- Climate action, reproductive rights, and more!

# DELIVERING FOR YOU

Here are just a few of the key pieces of legislation enacted into law in 2023:



## Increases to Child & Dependent Care Tax Credits

The 2023-2024 state budget included a number of provisions that will deliver real help for thousands of Pennsylvanians. I am especially excited about a significant expansion to the state's Child & Dependent Care tax credits, which will ease the burden for working families who pay for and rely on child and dependent care.

Pennsylvania families who qualify for the federal Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit are automatically eligible for the state tax credit, which is currently equal to 30% of the federal credit. This year, nearly a quarter million working families will see their state tax credits more than triple. That means more money back in your pocket for childcare expenses and dependent care expenses, beginning with the 2023 tax return you'll file in spring of 2024.

## Property Tax/Rent Rebate Expansion

In 2023, Governor Shapiro signed legislation expanding the Property Tax/Rent Rebate (PTRR) program to nearly 175,000 more Pennsylvania seniors and nearly doubling rebates for many of the 400,000 Pennsylvanians who already qualify.

This expansion is the largest targeted tax break for Pennsylvania seniors in nearly two decades. It raises the maximum rebate for seniors from \$650 to \$1,000, increases the income cap for both renters and homeowners to \$45,000 a year, and ties that cap to cost-of-living increases. This expansion will provide much-needed tax relief to help both renters and homeowners stay in the homes and communities they love.



## Student Teacher Stipend Program

In 2023, I introduced legislation to create a Student Teacher Stipend Program, which will help to address our statewide teacher shortage by providing up to \$15,000 for aspiring teachers during their student teaching semesters as well as a \$2,500 stipend for cooperating teachers who agree to mentor student teachers. In June, my proposal passed the House with strong bipartisan support, by a vote of 141-62, as HB 1331.

In December, my legislation passed both the House and Senate as part of the Education Code bill and was signed into law by Governor Shapiro.

For aspiring teachers, student teaching is a full-time commitment that often prohibits college students from holding another job during their student-teaching semester. The prospect of giving up that income, while incurring additional expenses associated with things like commuting and purchasing a work wardrobe, is a significant barrier for prospective teachers in Pennsylvania who are already struggling to afford the cost of a college education and working to cover their living expenses.

By providing student teachers with the resources and compensation they deserve, the Student Teacher Stipend program will alleviate some of the financial burdens that prevent many from pursuing a career in this high-demand field. This is an essential step in both addressing our teacher shortage and supporting every aspiring educator in Pennsylvania so they can join the workforce fully prepared to teach upon graduation.

# AWAITING ACTION IN THE SENATE

## Protections for LGBTQ+ Individuals

In 2024, it is still legal in Pennsylvania for LGBTQ+ individuals to be denied housing, education, and access to public accommodations based on their sexual orientation or gender identity. Pennsylvania is currently the only state in the Northeast without LGBTQ+ antidiscrimination laws on the books.

In May 2023, the House passed the Fairness Act, an extension of the PA Human Relations Act that currently prohibits discrimination based on race, religion, disability, age, and other aspects of an individual's identity. The Fairness Act simply extends the protections guaranteed under this existing state law to include LGBTQ+ Pennsylvanians. The passage of this bill in the House moves us one step closer to creating a more fair and equal society in our great commonwealth.

I was proud to cosponsor and vote in support of the Fairness Act in the House because nobody should lose out on a job, apartment, access to education, or any other opportunity because of who they are or whom they love. This bill now awaits consideration in the Senate. Protection from discrimination should not be a partisan issue. Given the bipartisan passage of the Fairness Act in the House (on a vote of 102-98), I remain optimistic that the Senate will pass this legislation and make Pennsylvania the 25th state in the nation to codify anti-discrimination protections for LGBTQ+ people into state law.

For more bills that have passed the House and await action in the Senate, visit: [pahouse.com/deliveringforpa](https://pahouse.com/deliveringforpa).

# = WHAT I'M WORKING ON

Over the past year, I've met with constituents and policy advocates to work on legislation that reflect the priorities of the 155th Legislative District. Here are just a few of the bills I have introduced this legislative session. You can find a complete list of my sponsored legislation under the News tab on my website. Please contact my office with any questions or feedback!

## Reproductive Rights Amendment

Last year, following the *Dobbs v. Jackson* decision that overturned *Roe v. Wade*, I worked closely with Rep. Liz Hanbidge, our colleagues in the PA Women's Health Caucus, and reproductive health advocates to draft legislation that reaffirms and protects every Pennsylvanian's right to privacy and ensures that the state shall not deny or interfere with an individual's personal reproductive liberty with regard to abortion, contraception, or fertility care.

Our legislation, HB 1888, comes on the heels of a referendum approved by voters in Ohio last November, when Ohio became the latest "red" state where the people voted to protect reproductive rights by ballot initiative following the Supreme Court's June 2022 *Dobbs* ruling.

Abortion is currently safe and legal in the commonwealth, and as a mother to a young girl, I feel a responsibility to ensure that we protect and preserve that right. I do not want my daughter's personal health or economic future to be at

the mercy of the courts, a legislative majority, or a governor's veto pen. HB 1888, if approved by voters, would establish a durable constitutional right to personal reproductive liberty in Pennsylvania. While the people of Pennsylvania strongly support personal reproductive liberty, our call to action is engaging and building a pro-choice majority in both the House and Senate to move this initiative forward. This is just the beginning of the work, and my colleagues and I are committed to seeing it through.

## Updating AED and Emergency Preparedness Requirements in Schools

Sudden cardiac arrest claims the lives of more than 2,000 students every year; however, when AEDs are available nearby and people know how to use them, chances of survival increase dramatically. Sudden cardiac arrest can happen to anyone, at any time, without symptoms or warning signs, which is why it is imperative our schools are prepared to act and to save a life.

In 2023, I worked with Rep. Christina Sappes, Senator Katie Muth, and Aidan's Heart Foundation on legislation to require that all public school buildings in Pennsylvania have at least one active, working AED, as well as have a trained emergency response team and action plan in place. Our legislation is currently assigned to the House Education Committee, where I am hopeful it will receive a vote in 2024.

## Working For You IN HARRISBURG AND AT HOME



*Visiting with students at Uwchlan Hills Elementary School to talk about how a bill becomes law.*



*In Harrisburg at the Safe Schools LGBTQ+ Rally, advocating to protect all students from discrimination.*

*Asking questions at a policy hearing on the Norfolk Southern train derailment, and holding corporations accountable.*



*Education Committee hearing on my Student Teacher Stipends legislation, which was signed into law in December 2023.*

*At the Judiciary Committee hearing on my Reproductive Rights Amendment, with my sister Meghan, who testified about her experience.*



## Modernizing Pennsylvania's Renewable Energy Standards

Raising our renewable energy targets so that more of the energy on our power grid stems from clean, renewable sources would save Pennsylvania residents and businesses money on their utility bills, while creating new family-sustaining jobs and cutting emissions.

When Pennsylvania adopted its current Alternative Energy Portfolio Standards (AEPS) in 2004, they were forward-thinking for the time. But nearly 20 years later, Pennsylvania has exceeded those goals, and surrounding states have surpassed us. It's time for Pennsylvania to get back in the game. Today, we have an historic opportunity to incentivize renewable energy development in our commonwealth through federal Inflation Reduction Act funds and re-establish Pennsylvania as a competitor and a leader in our nation's clean-energy economy.

I have introduced legislation, HB 1467, that updates our previous energy standards and sets new realistic and achievable renewable energy requirements, putting Pennsylvania on the path toward 30% renewable energy by the year 2030. My bill received a hearing in the House Environmental Resources & Energy Committee in December 2023, and I am hopeful that it will advance in the House and Senate in the spring of 2024.



*My team and I enjoyed meeting constituents at community days and events throughout the district. Here I am with my helper, Ellie, at Upper Uwchlan Township's annual Block Party.*



*Aidan's Heart Foundation students visit the Capitol to advocate for AEDs in schools and on sports fields.*

## Discussions around the Legalization of Cannabis for Adult Use

This past fall, the PA House Health Subcommittee on Health Care, of which I am a member, held informational meetings on Legalizing Cannabis for Adult Use. As the conversation around legalization picks up steam in Pennsylvania, and with recreational marijuana now legal in all of our neighboring states except West Virginia, it's important that we understand the potential benefits and pitfalls of legalization and learn from the policy successes and failures in states where adult-use marijuana is already legal. I have been grateful for the opportunity to hear testimony on multiple sides of the debate in our subcommittee hearings.

I believe that legalizing recreational adult-use marijuana has the potential to reduce unnecessary burdens on our criminal justice system, restore the harm done to countless individuals and communities as a result of unjust and unequal cannabis criminalization, and provide a new revenue source for our commonwealth. That said, there are multiple criminal justice, equity, and law enforcement aspects that need to be worked out as Pennsylvania considers legalization. I have concerns about how to prevent the sale or distribution to children and minors, and I have heard from our local police departments about the need to develop standards and tools for measuring impairment under DUI laws.

While I believe that legalizing and carefully regulating marijuana has the potential to improve product safety and reduce reliance on more harmful substances like opioids, substance misuse is understandably among the chief concerns that come up in the conversation about legalizing recreational marijuana. Whether recreational marijuana is legal or illegal in our state, we need to end the stigma around substance use disorders and instead address the underlying causes, particularly trauma and the way individuals often turn to substances as a way to self-medicate and respond to trauma.

I expect considerable discussion around the issue of cannabis legalization to continue throughout this legislative session. I will keep sharing these conversations as they arise, as I feel it's essential that my constituents and the residents of Pennsylvania are informed about and engaged in these important decisions.

## School Funding Update

In February 2023, the Commonwealth Court declared that Pennsylvania's school funding system is unconstitutional. In January 2024, the Basic Education Funding Commission approved a report with specific recommendations to fix what's broken.

This will be a critical year for public school funding. On **March 5 at 10 AM**, I will host a Policy Hearing on the Basic Education Funding Commission Report, what it means for our local school districts, and the importance of passing a state budget that includes strong support for our public schools. Tune in at [pahouse.com/live](https://pahouse.com/live).

# PREPARING FOR PRIMARY ELECTION DAY

The 2024 Primary Election will be held on Tuesday, April 23. This year, Primary Election Day unfortunately coincides with the start of Passover, which may create a conflict for many in the Jewish community. If you will be observing the holiday, or if you prefer to vote by mail for any reason, be sure to apply for your mail-in or absentee ballot by April 16, 2024 (earlier is better!) to ensure you are able to participate in the electoral process.

Visit [vote.pa.gov](http://vote.pa.gov) to register to vote, check your registration status, find your polling place, find important election dates, or request a mail-in or absentee ballot. Remember, new voters who will turn 18 on or before April 23, 2024, are eligible to register as well!

**2024 Primary Election**  
**Important Dates**

- Apr 8** Last day to register to vote in the primary election. [vote.pa.gov/Register](http://vote.pa.gov/Register)
- Apr 16** Last day to apply for a mail ballot. [vote.pa.gov/ApplyMailBallot](http://vote.pa.gov/ApplyMailBallot)
- Apr 23** Election Day. Polls are open from 7 AM to 8 PM. [vote.pa.gov/Polls](http://vote.pa.gov/Polls)
- Apr 23** Completed mail ballots must be received by 8 PM. [vote.pa.gov/County](http://vote.pa.gov/County)

[vote.pa.gov](http://vote.pa.gov)

## MY OFFICE CAN HELP YOU WITH:

- PennDOT documents, disability plates, and placards
- SEPTA Senior Key Cards
- Questions about REAL ID
- Birth certificate applications
- Unemployment Compensation issues
- Department of Human Services benefits (SNAP, Medical Assistance, Rent & Utility Assistance)
- Citations from the Pennsylvania House of Representatives for outstanding local accomplishments and family milestones
- Consumer complaints
- Concerns about state road conditions
- PACE cards for senior citizens
- Property Tax/Rent Rebate applications
- Unclaimed Property searches
- And more!



**Do you have a SEPTA Senior Fare Card?**

Seniors ages 65 and older can ride SEPTA routes in PA for free with a Senior Fare Card! Sign-up or reapply for your card at my district office today!

**Exton**  
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DANIELLE FRIEL OTTEN  
155  
STATE REPRESENTATIVE

DOES THE STATE HAVE YOUR UNCLAIMED PROPERTY?

The PA Treasury has \$3.2 billion in unclaimed property. Let me help you search!

Search & Claim for FREE

It's fast & simple

**Unclaimed Property Office Hours**

First Wednesday of the Month  
9 AM - 4:30 PM

PENNSYLVANIA TREASURY ESTABLISHED 1776

DANIELLE FRIEL OTTEN 155 STATE REPRESENTATIVE



**DANIELLE FRIEL** 155 **OTTEN**  
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## STAY INFORMED!

Visit [RepDanielle.com/emailsSignup](http://RepDanielle.com/emailsSignup) to join my email list for regular updates from Harrisburg and the district.

lpo.ks.0224

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### Join us for Mobile Office Hours at the Downingtown Library!

Staff from my district office will be at the Downingtown Library, 122 Wallace Avenue, on the fourth Wednesday of each month, from 11 AM – 1 PM.

This is a great opportunity to get help with state services like Unclaimed Property or Unemployment Compensation, sign up for your SEPTA Key Senior ID Card (must be age 65+/ bring your ID), or let us know about the issues that most concern you.

Stop in to say hello and find out how we can help! We look forward to meeting you!

### Free Paper-Only Shred Event & Food Drive Saturday, April 20, 1 PM - 3 PM

Mark your calendars! My office will hold a FREE Paper-Only Shred Event and Food Drive on Saturday, April 20, in the parking lot of the Chester County Food Bank, 650 Pennsylvania Drive, Exton.

Bring your confidential documents to be destroyed! Each car will be limited to 4 file-size boxes. Small paper clips and staples are OK, but please no binder clips, binders, or cardboard (plan to take your boxes home with you).

This event is first come, first served. When the trucks are full, the event will end. All shredded paper will be recycled!

#### List Of Some Most-Needed Food Items:

- Cereal
- Pasta Sauce / Canned Tomatoes
- Canned Tuna, Salmon & Chicken
- Fruits (in juice), canned or in cups
- Brown Rice
- Please no glass or expired items!