

Report to the People

Winter 2020

State Representative
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19th Legislative District

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Adult-use cannabis update



I want to provide you a brief but concise update on the effort to legalize adult-use cannabis. I have introduced H.B. 2050, which is similar to my previous bill, but includes specific provisions related to permitting, including private sector dispensary permits, craft cannabis permits, growers and processors.

The bill also includes specific criminal justice components, including the decriminalization of the possession of cannabis and the expungement of cannabis-related offenses. The one area that continues to be overlooked regarding cannabis legislation has to do with senseless arrests for possession, often for very small amounts of cannabis. These arrests do nothing but add to an already stressed criminal justice system, and I believe our law enforcement officers should be busy pursuing dangerous criminals, not everyday people.

The people have spoken on this issue: an October 2019 Gallup poll found that 66% of Americans surveyed support legal cannabis. That same month, a Franklin and Marshall poll showed 59% of Pennsylvanians support its legalization.

While I have attempted to address the issue several times with my Republican colleagues, they refuse to have the discussion. We stand ready, willing and able to come to the table to have that discussion, because not doing so would be a significant disservice to all citizens of this great commonwealth.

I will continue to keep you posted on this topic, including specific legislation regarding adult-use cannabis.

Dispelling the myths of adult-use cannabis

"If adult-use cannabis is legalized, our teens will begin using cannabis more frequently."

FACT – In states where cannabis is fully legal, teens are no more likely to use cannabis. Nationwide studies show year after year that teens already have access to unregulated underground cannabis that is not tested for safety.

"Cannabis is addictive."

FACT – This statement is not based on observable reality or rooted in any scientific finding.

"Employers will have no way of knowing if their employees are high."

FACT – Employers have no way of knowing if their employees are coming to work drunk or under the influence of any other substance.

"Legal cannabis will lead individuals to use harder drugs."

FACT – Not only has the gateway drug argument been thoroughly debunked, study after study continues to show that alcohol and stress are more likely to cause individuals to use heavier/harder drugs, not cannabis.

"Cannabis is dangerous."

FACT – Cannabis, to date, has never singularly lead to anyone's death. If we are being honest, we know that cannabis is as close to harmless as it gets. The legal substance alcohol is responsible for tens of thousands of deaths each year, yet Republicans have tried to expand access to alcohol.

Driver's license restoration efforts moving forward

Imagine this scenario: you've received a suspension of your driving privileges, and you are diligently working to get those restored. In the meantime, you have to figure out how you're going to get to work, or you find your child is sick and needs immediate medical attention.

What do you do? Do you try to quickly find reliable transportation, or do you take a chance and drive to work or to your child's pediatrician, risking additional suspension penalties?

My goal is to create a one-year restoration program that would give these affected drivers the opportunity to pay off fines and costs, either through a payment plan or by completing community service.

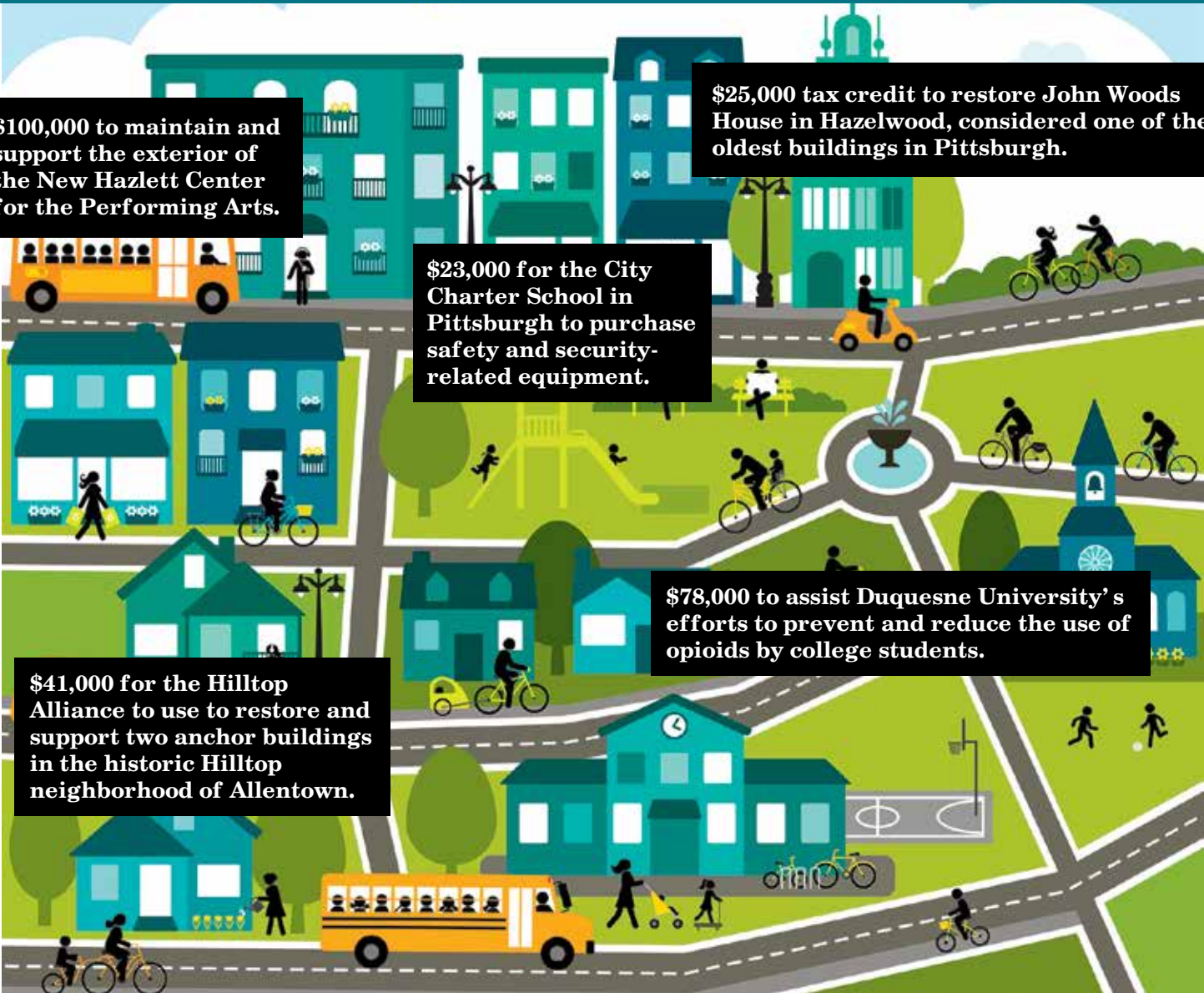
House Bill 80 is modeled after a similar program in California, which is designed to break the vicious cycle of suspensions, fines and penalties, but still require these drivers to serve the suspension for the underlying offense.

I was pleased the House Transportation Committee approved my bill recently, and I look forward to it being considered in the House shortly.



Investing in our community

Since May, our communities have received \$267,000 in state and federal funds to support job creation, protect our environment, help victims of crime, and keep our schools safe.



\$100,000 to maintain and support the exterior of the New Hazlett Center for the Performing Arts.

\$25,000 tax credit to restore John Woods House in Hazelwood, considered one of the oldest buildings in Pittsburgh.

\$23,000 for the City Charter School in Pittsburgh to purchase safety and security-related equipment.

\$78,000 to assist Duquesne University's efforts to prevent and reduce the use of opioids by college students.

\$41,000 for the Hilltop Alliance to use to restore and support two anchor buildings in the historic Hilltop neighborhood of Allentown.

March 23 - Lobby Day at the state Capitol

Networking and information available for minority, women and disadvantaged business owners

I'm pleased to again host Lobby Day, an opportunity to help and encourage minority, women and other disadvantaged business owners and operators, for them to be honored for their success and also gain additional networking opportunities, and learn about state and federal programs to support them.

This year, the Lobby Day activities at the state Capitol will kick off with a news conference, followed by a free and open networking mixer. The day includes several issue and industry-focused workshops and events designed

to help these businesses and also provide opportunities for them to network with a variety of state agencies and organizations.

There will be free bus transportation with limited seating leaving from Pittsburgh at 6 a.m. on March 23, arriving back from the Capitol at 8 p.m.

For more information, please visit my website at www.pahouse.com/Wheatley or contact The People's Office at 412-471-7760 for the most up-to-date information.



Around the district



Having fun and getting fit at our August Health Fair!



Successful Pathways to Pardons event with state Rep. Lee in January.



Helping our district's seniors obtain their ConnectCards.



Home Heating Assistance

If you or someone you know is having a tough time paying home heating bills, the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program, or LIHEAP, is available to help.

This program offers cash grants to help with home heating bills and crisis grants to help those in need with emergency situations, such as a broken furnace or an unexpected fuel shortage.

Renters and homeowners who qualify can have a grant – which does not need to be repaid – sent directly to their utility company or fuel provider. Grants range from \$200 to \$1,000, based on household size, income and fuel type.

My office can help you file a LIHEAP application. LIHEAP information is also available by calling the LIHEAP Client Helpline at 1-866-857-7095 or by applying online at www.compass.state.pa.us.



REAL ID Information



October 1, 2020

The federal REAL ID Act takes effect in Pennsylvania.

The best thing you can do to prepare for REAL ID is to get your documents together:

- ✓ **Proof of identity**
- ✓ **Proof of Social Security number**
- ✓ **Two current, physical proofs of PA residency**
- ✓ **Proof of all legal name changes**

Visit **PENNDOT.GOV/REALID**

If you plan to fly or enter certain federal buildings after Oct. 1, 2020, you will need either a REAL ID-compliant driver's license or photo ID card, or another federally acceptable identification, like a valid passport or military ID.

REAL ID-compliant driver's licenses and non-driver photo ID cards are available for Pennsylvania residents who want one.

My office can assist you with any documentation you might need for a REAL ID or any questions you may have.

If you're ready to get your REAL ID, you can order one online if you have already been pre-verified. Please visit the following link from PennDOT for more information: www.dmv.pa.gov/REALID/. At that link, click on "Get a REAL ID Online."

A REAL ID driver's license or non-driver photo ID costs a one-time fee of \$30 plus a renewal fee (\$30.50 for a 4-year non-commercial driver's license or non-driver photo ID).

Please note: PennDOT does not accept cash; if you are paying in person, remember to bring a check or money order.

My office will be hosting REAL ID informational events in the near future – stay tuned for updates!

Save the date – Golden Luncheon 2020!

It's an event I look forward to each year, and the 11th annual Golden Luncheon will be here before you know it!

This year's celebration will be held on **Thursday, April 2** from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Rivers Casino Ballroom, located at 777 Casino Drive in Pittsburgh.

Please join me for a complimentary lunch, along with great entertainment, games and giveaways! You'll also receive valuable information from a variety of agencies and organizations for seniors on health care prescription drug plans, volunteer opportunities and much more.

Space is limited, so please call The People's Office to RSVP at 412-471-7760.



**Thursday, April 2
10 a.m. to 2 p.m.
Rivers Casino
Ballroom
777 Casino Drive
Pittsburgh**



The People's Office can help you with:

- Car registrations, special tags, handicap placards, titles and driver's license applications
- Information on financial assistance for higher education
- Assistance in obtaining and completing state forms of all kinds
- Voter registration and absentee ballot applications
- Unemployment compensation, disability and workers' compensation
- Birth and death certificates
- Issues with the Department of Human Services (food stamps, medical and income assistance)
- Pennsylvania income tax questions or problems
- Requests for literature of all kinds – bills, regulations, statutes, Pennsylvania maps, senior citizen information
- Citations from the Pennsylvania House of Representatives for outstanding accomplishments and family milestones
- Inquiries about utilities and the Public Utility Commission
- Issues with insurance companies
- Renewal of state-issued licenses or certifications
- Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program problems or questions
- Questions about the state lottery
- PACE prescription-drug cards for senior citizens
- Consumer complaints
- Liquor Control Board concerns or questions
- Tours of the state Capitol for individuals or groups
- Information about federal, state and local government agencies

If you need help with any state or government-related services, please feel free to contact my office at 412-471-7760 for assistance.