



SENATE
STATE OF DELAWARE
411 LEGISLATIVE AVENUE
DOVER, DELAWARE 19901

Senate Elections, Government & Community Affairs Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, January 23, 2019
1:30 pm
Senate Majority Caucus Room
Legislative Hall

Members Present:

Senator Nicole Poore, Chair
Senator John Walsh, Vice-Chair
Senator David McBride
Senator Catherine Cloutier
Senator Bryant Richardson

Attendees Present:

Senator Harris McDowell
Lakresha Moultrie, Delaware State University
Jackie Griffith, Delaware State University
Rebecca Goldsmith, Delaware Department of Finance
Connie Holland, Delaware Office of State Planning
James Nutter, Parkowski, Guerke and Swayze
Brian Shirey, Delaware Technical Community College
Mark Brainard, Delaware Technical Community College
Sandy Spence, League of Women Voters of Delaware
Robert Maxwell, Maxwell & Associates

Senator Nicole Poore, Chair, convened the meeting at 1:35 p.m.

I. SB 7 (Hansen) AN ACT TO AMEND TITLE 29 OF THE DELAWARE CODE RELATING TO THE DELAWARE POPULATION CONSORTIUM.

Senator Poore introduced and read the synopsis of the bill.

Senator Stephanie Hanson provided comments on the bill, highlighting that the legislation codifies processes already in operation related to the population consortium.

Connie Holland from the Office of State Planning expressed her support for the bill. She said that the bill increases transparency and is part of Governor Carney's Government Efficiency and Accountability Review Board (GEAR) initiative.

Sandy Spence from the League of Women Voters asked if the bill would accurately count prison population.

Connie Holland replied that the Complete Count Commission would ensure that the numbers were correct and not skewed by prison populations.

SB 7 was signed out of committee with 2 favorable and 3 on its merits.

II. SB 10 (Townsend) AN ACT TO AMEND TITLE 15 RELATING TO VOTER REGISTRATION.

Senator Poore introduced SB 10 and read the bill's synopsis.

The bill was signed out of committee with 2 favorable and 2 on its merits.

III. SB 50 (McDowell) AN ACT TO AMEND TITLE 14 AND TITLE 29 OF THE DELAWARE CODE RELATING TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A COMMUNITY COLLEGE INFRASTRUCTURE FUND.

Senator Poore introduced SB 50 and provided an overview of the bill.

Mark Brainard from Delaware Technical Community College stated that state government primarily funds the college. He provided an overview of Delaware Tech's infrastructure need. Mr. Brainard said the bill would propose a funding model that mirrors the state's vo-tech system to raise a modest amount of revenue. He added that the bill would take Delaware Tech out of the Bond Bill, which would free up state revenue.

Senator Poore asked if this bill's provisions would be comparable to what other universities are doing in the state of Delaware.

Mr. Brainard said that the state of Delaware is an extreme example. He pointed out that the state's other universities have bonding authorities and endowments unlike Delaware Tech, which provides them with a way to finance infrastructure projects.

Senator McBride noted Mr. Brainard's point about the positive impact that the bill would have on the Bond Bill. He asked how much Delaware Tech received from the Bond Bill last year.

Mr. Brainard replied that they received \$10 million last year from the Bond Bill, but for the prior ten years, they averaged \$4.5 million for deferred maintenance.

Senator McBride highlighted the importance of helping Delaware Tech and echoed comments that unlike other universities, Delaware Tech does not have endowments to leverage for infrastructure improvements.

Senator Poore shared comments about Delaware Tech's enrollment numbers and that 87% of graduates stay and work in Delaware.

Mr. Brainard added that 96% of Delaware Tech students are Delawareans.

Senator John Walsh, Vice Chair, asked about the limits on tax increases in the bill.

Mr. Brainard clarified limits on tax limits and provided information on how the separate limits were set by county to account for differing property values.

Senator Walsh also asked Mr. Brainard to elaborate on the cost share burden on property owners compared to Delaware Tech students.

Mr. Brainard provided information on the steady tuition increases that Delaware Tech has been forced to implement over the past five years. However, Mr. Brainard stressed the college's commitment to keeping tuition low so that all Delawareans can access postsecondary education.

Senator Catherine Cloutier thanked Delaware Tech for the opportunities given to students across the state and shared a story about her son's experience at Delaware Tech.

Senator Bryant Richardson stated that he would sign the bill out as unfavorable because he would like to see the money for this come from the Bond Bill not a tax increase.

Senator Harris McDowell stressed that the bill would result in a very low tax increase. He emphasized the college's problems with accumulated deferred maintenance.

Senator Richardson expressed concern over several schools in the state that have used capital funds to fund lavish buildings.

Senator McDowell stressed his belief that Delaware Tech would use the money efficiently.

Jackie Griffith from Delaware State University stated her opposition to the bill because it does not equally benefit the state's higher education institutions. She stated that Delaware State University has \$200 million in deferred maintenance.

Senator Poore asked Ms. Griffith if Delaware State University has bonding rights.

Jackie Griffith replied that she did not know but would look into it.

Senator McDowell said that he would be willing to work with Delaware State University on future legislation.

Senator Poore emphasized her support for higher education institutions and stated that institutions have different levels of need at different points in time.

Robert Maxwell of Maxwell & Associates stated his opposition to the bill. He stated that Delaware's low property tax rate is a driver of economic development.

SB 50 was signed out of committee with 4 on its merits.

Senator Poore adjourned the meeting at 2:15 pm.