

**DAVID S. BENTZ**  
STATE REPRESENTATIVE  
18<sup>th</sup> District



**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**  
**STATE OF DELAWARE**  
**411 LEGISLATIVE AVENUE**  
**DOVER, DELAWARE 19901**

**COMMITTEES**  
Health & Human Development, Chair  
Energy, Vice-Chair  
Appropriations  
Joint Finance  
Labor  
Natural Resources

**House Health and Human Development Meeting Minutes**  
**1.19.2021**

Chair Bentz called the virtual meeting to order at 3:05 p.m. He stated that the meeting was planned in accordance with HCR 1 and took the roll call of the committee's members. Members present included Vice Chair Minor-Brown and Reps. Chukwuocha, Johnson, Baumbach, Heffernan, Morrison, Kowalko, Postles, Shupe, Smith, Hensley, and Collins. For a list of guests present please see the attendance list below.

Chair Bentz introduced **HB 20, AN ACT TO AMEND TITLE 14 OF THE DELAWARE CODE RELATING TO THE PROVISION OF FREE FEMININE HYGIENE PRODUCTS.**

Representative Longhurst emphasized the steps this bill takes for equity for reproductive care and education. The menstrual period equity bill provides affordable options for taking care of menstrual health, ending the stigma around periods to ensure that menstrual health is a priority.

Representative Longhurst stated the bill's purpose as providing menstrual products in 50 percent of bathrooms at middle and high schools for public and charter schools, at no cost to students. The total cost is \$77,023 with a onetime cost of \$29,875 for dispensers which is broken down to \$4,053 per school district and \$1,572 per district for dispensers. School nurses will be consulted to decide which products are purchased.

Representative Longhurst highlighted the need for the bill explaining that students are provided other essential items in school such as pencils and toilet paper, and as feminine hygiene products are also essential, they should also be provided. Additionally, girls growing up in low-income families are less likely to be able to access products turning to unsanitary methods creating a health concern. Third, a survey from the Always company in 2017 found that 1 in 5 girls have left school early or missed school entirely due to a lack of supplies. Representative Longhurst emphasized the need to provide dignity to girls in school.

Representative Longhurst shared that amendments will be coming to line 6 to update the year to 2021-2022 and to change language to include nongender bathrooms in schools.

Representative Smith had a point of clarification on the rationale of having dispensers in bathrooms rather than the school nurse's office. Representative Longhurst responded that girls would prefer to take care of the issue in the bathroom right away, rather than having to go to the nurse to ask for products.

Representatives Chukwuocha and Johnson voiced strong support for the bill.

Representative Hensley had a question about the fiscal note and exactly what would be expected from the schools financially. Representative Longhurst clarified that the schools are responsible for the optional one-time cost of \$1,572 for the dispensers. Each district is then responsible for a yearly cost of \$4,053 for the products.

Representative Morrison also voiced strong support from his perspective as a former educator.

Chair Bentz opened the floor for public comment.

Abby Sipress, a fifth grade teacher in the Brandywine School District expressed strong support for this bill as it causes embarrassment and health problems, and fills a need that may not be filled at home.

Deborah Hamilton voiced support for the bill on behalf of Planned Parenthood of Delaware.

Christine Shiltz also voiced strong support on behalf of Christiana Care.

Melanie Levin, Director of the Office of Women's Advancement and Advocacy, spoke on behalf of her office and the Office of the Governor in support of the bill. She highlighted the importance of these measures to helping girls stay in school.

Kendall Massett, the Executive Director for Delaware Charter Schools Network, spoke in support of the bill and provided an example of further steps that one of their schools has taken by providing female students in grades 5-8 kits that include an information card, a tampon, and sanitary napkin to keep in their locker. They can get any products to refill this kit or take home from a supply closet.

Susan Conaty-Buck represented the Delaware Coalition of Nurse Practitioners and the Delaware Nurses Association and supported the bill as well.

A motion was made by Rep. Kowalko and seconded by Rep. Baumbach to release HB 20 from committee, the motion carried. Yes = 12 (Chair Bentz, Reps. Chukwuocha, Johnson, Baumbach, Heffernan, Morrison, Kowalko, Postles, Smith, Briggs King, Hensley, Collins); No = 0; Absent = 3 (Vice Chair Minor-Brown, Reps. Lynn and Shupe). The bill was released from committee with a F=9, M=5, U=1 vote.

**Chair Bentz introduced HB 48, AN ACT TO AMEND TITLE 16 OF THE DELAWARE CODE RELATING TO THE DELAWARE HEALTH CARE COMMISSION.**

Chair Bentz, the sponsor of the bill, stated the bill's purpose of creating a student loan repayment program for primary care practitioners who work in underserved areas of the state. It would allow for up to \$50,000 over the course of four years for recipients. Chair Bentz explained that the current bill is asking for \$1 million with agreements from the hospitals and insurance to each match this amount.

Rep. Baumbach asked if this would be included in the Governor's recommended budget. Chair Bentz stated that it was included in his FY21 recommended budget, but he is not clear if it will be in Governor Carney's recommended budget for FY22.

Rep. Smith emphasized his view that this bill represents another tool to utilize to address the issues with primary care coverage seen in the state. Chair Bentz echoed this sentiment explaining that the COVID-19 pandemic has exasperated an issue of not enough recent graduates of medical school going into primary care as practices have shut down and moved to concierge.

Chair Bentz introduced Dr. Nancy Fan of the Delaware Healthcare Commission who has worked on developing this bill. Dr. Fan stated that this bill remains a priority for the Delaware Healthcare Commission. The commission has a workforce subcommittee looking at short term and long-term goals of expanding the healthcare workforce Dr. Fan describes as in crisis.

Chair Bentz then acknowledged Rep. Shupe for his work in developing his bill. He then opened the meeting to public comment.

Susan Conaty-Buck representing the Delaware Coalition of Nurse Practitioners and the Delaware Nurses Association expressed support for the concept of the bill. However, concern was expressed as while the bill includes nurse practitioners and physician assistants as potential recipients, it states that priority consideration will be given to DIMER participants or Delaware residency-based programs. In Conaty-Buck's view this makes it unlikely that nurse practitioners, certified nurse midwives, clinical nurse specialists, or physicians assistants would get funding in this program. She stated that advanced practice clinicians (APC) play a critical role in primary care and there is a need to focus on their retention as they can also travel to neighboring states quite easily, states which often have better salaries and benefits. The Delaware Coalition of Nurse Practitioners and Delaware Nurses Association are requesting that the bill considers prioritizing nonphysician APCs in order to provide opportunities to all kinds of primary care practitioners.

Christine Schiltz voiced strong support for the bill on behalf of Christiana Care.

Louis Rafetto, chairperson of DIMER, expressed support of the bill. However, Rafetto requests that the bill be expanded to include dentists who also have high education costs, as well as large startup costs with equipment. Rafetto explained that these start up costs also have the effect of providing incentive to not move once set up in a community, a benefit for providing care.

Chris Haas from the Delaware Department of Insurance requested additional information on the bill's reference of funding from insurers. Ms. Haas expressed the department's support for a strong primary care environment, but a need to better understand the bill and the impact on expenses and premiums. She stated that the department is unable to support the bill at this time.

Kate Smith, the program manager at the Delaware Academy of Medicine Delaware Public Health Association, is personally paying off her student debt and discussed the severity of the issue. Smith explained the hesitancy of medical students to go into family practices which do not pay as well as other options when they have such high student debt to pay off. She felt, this bill would enable new physicians to practice in low-income areas while paying off their debt.

Pam Price, the senior government relations representative for Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield Delaware, spoke on behalf of the organization in strong support of the bill.

The chair of DIMER, Sherman Townsend, explained the difficulty of recruiting students into primary care, sharing that the average medical student has \$200,000 of debt. As other states have similar repayment programs to what is proposed in the bill, it is a competitive environment. Townsend expressed the importance of recruiting students for primary care before they start a residency program and shared the positive effect already visible due to discussion of this bill's passage.

Ohmar Khan, a family practice physician and the President and CEO of the Delaware Health Sciences Alliance, voiced support for the bill. Khan explained that this bill adds a financial component to the DIMER program, enabling Delawareans to serve their communities. He added that this bill would be one that creates a positive primary care environment in Delaware.

Wayne Smith from the Delaware Healthcare Association referenced a study that forecasted that by the year 2030, Delaware would be 177 primary care physicians short of what was needed to adequately care for the population. Smith stated that a robust payment program would put Delaware in an attractive and competitive position to attract the practitioners needed. In addition to the Delaware Healthcare Association, Smith referenced a broad coalition of support for the bill from other organizations.

Lincoln Willis from the Medical Society of Delaware expressed strong support for the bill.

Chair Bentz reiterated the importance of this bill in retaining DIMER program participants within the state as primary care providers.

A motion was made by Rep. Heffernan and seconded by Rep. Hensley to release HB 48 from committee, the motion carried. Yes = 13 (Chair Bentz, Vice Chair Minor-Brown Reps. Chukwuocha, Johnson, Baumbach, Heffernan, Morrison, Kowalko, Postles, Shupe, Smith, Hensley, Collins); No = 0; Absent = 2 (Reps. Lynn and Briggs King). The bill was released from committee with a F=8, M=7, U=0 vote.

Chair Bentz introduced **HB 55, AN ACT TO AMEND TITLE 16 OF THE DELAWARE CODE RELATING TO THE GUN SHOP PROJECT.**

Rep. Matthews emphasized the frequent use of firearms in suicide, and that they have the highest fatalities of all self-harm methods. The primary purpose of the bill is to develop, create, and provide suicide prevention materials for the dealers and consumers of licensed dealers and consumers of deadly weapons. The Gun Shop Project will be overseen by the Suicide Prevention Coalition. Rep. Matthews indicated that through coordination with DHSS references to CCDW will be taken out as it is a Department of Justice process, and to ensure that only materials intended for public consumption will be shared only.

Chair Bentz opened the floor for public comment.

Annie Slease, the Director of Advocacy and Education at the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI Delaware), voiced strong support for this bill. She highlighted the unique position gun shop owners can have in saving lives, sharing the statistic that fewer than 10 percent of suicides attempts are made with a firearm, but more than half of those who die by suicide, die by gun. Slease stated that suicidal behavior is known to be impulsive at times which is why putting space between the person at risk and lethal means can prevent suicide.

Traci Murphy, Executive Director of the Delaware Coalition Against Gun Violence, voiced the coalition's support for the bill. Murphy stated that 9 out of 10 people who survive a suicide attempt do not eventually die by suicide. Additionally,

Murphy explained that Delaware's suicide rates and firearm rates are higher in rural areas despite the fact that depression rates are not higher, emphasizing that guns are simply a more lethal means of suicide.

Sarah Stowens, President of Delaware Moms Demand Action, spoke in support of the bill stating that it is an important step in preventing gun related deaths, highlighting the implementation in over 20 states and the fact that 50 percent of gun deaths in Delaware are by suicide.

Scott Kinder spoke on behalf of the National Shooting Sports Foundation in support of the bill.

Rick Armitage also spoke in support of the bill for the National Rifle Association.

Jeff Hague, President of the Delaware State Sportsman Association, spoke in support, emphasizing the critical role gun shop owners can have in the fight against suicide.

A motion was made by Rep. Briggs King and seconded by Rep. Johnson to release HB 55 from committee, the motion carried. Yes = 13 (Chair Bentz, Vice Chair Minor-Brown Reps. Chukwuocha, Johnson, Baumbach, Heffernan, Morrison, Kowalko, Postles, Shupe, Briggs King, Hensley, Collins); No = 0; Absent = 1 (Reps. Lynn and Smith). The bill was released from committee with a F=9, M=6, U=0 vote.

Chair Bentz adjourned the meeting at 4:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by:

Chelsea Chatterton

#### Speaker List:

- Abby Sipress
- Deborah Hamilton (Planned Parenthood of Delaware)
- Christine Shiltz (Christiana Care)
- Melanie Levin (Office of Women's Advancement and Advocacy)
- Kendall Massett (Delaware Charter Schools Network)
- Susan Conaty-Buck (Delaware Coalition of Nurse Practitioners and Delaware Nurses Association)
- Dr. Nancy Fan (Delaware Healthcare Commission)
- Louis Rafetto (DIMER)
- Chris Haas (Delaware Department of Insurance)
- Kate Smith (Delaware Academy of Medicine Delaware Public Health Association)
- Pam Price (Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield Delaware)
- Sherman Townsend (DIMER)
- Omar Khan (Delaware Health Sciences Alliance)
- Wayne Smith (Delaware Healthcare Association)
- Lincoln Willis (Medical Society of Delaware)
- Annie Slease (National Alliance on Mental Illness)
- Tracie Murphy (Delaware Coalition Against Gun Violence)
- Sarah Stowens (Delaware Moms Demand Action)
- Scott Kinder (National Shooting Sports Foundation)
- Rick Armitage (National Rifle Association)
- Jeff Hague (Delaware State Sportsman Association)

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