

Senate Executive Committee

152nd General Assembly
Wednesday, March 27, 2024
Senate Chamber/Virtual Meeting
3:03 p.m. – 3:23 p.m.

Committee Members Present:

Senator David P. Sokola	David.Sokola@delaware.gov
Senator Bryan Townsend (virtual)	Bryan.Townsend@delaware.gov
Senator S. Elizabeth Lockman	Elizabeth.Lockman@delaware.gov
Senator Sarah McBride	Sarah.McBride@delaware.gov
Senator Marie Pinkney	Marie.Pinkney@delaware.gov
Senator Gerald W. Hocker	Gerald.Hocker@delaware.gov
Senator Brian Pettyjohn	Brian.Pettyjohn@delaware.gov

Other Legislators Present:

Senator Nicole Poore	Nicole.Poore@delaware.gov
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Staff:

Valerie McCartan, Senate	Valerie.McCartan@delaware.gov
Charline Ganthier-Cine	Charline.Ganthier-Cine@delaware.gov
Carolyn Martin-Pettaway	Carolyn.Martin-Pettaway@delaware.gov

Public attendees:

Appendix A contains a list of members of the public attending the meeting virtually, and those who signed the in-person sign-in sheet and/or provided testimony on the legislative portion of the agenda during this meeting.

Agenda

Nominations:

1. State Board of Elections
Appoint: Elizabeth Moore

Legislation

1. HB 24 w/ HA 1 (Longhurst) AN ACT TO AMEND TITLE 30 OF THE DELAWARE CODE RELATING TO CHARITABLE DONATIONS AND INCOME TAX RETURNS.
2. HB 315 (Wilson-Anton) AN ACT TO AMEND TITLE 9, TITLE 14, AND TITLE 31 OF THE DELAWARE CODE RELATING TO TECHNICAL CORRECTIONS.

Senator Sokola commenced the meeting and thanked everyone for joining both virtually and in person. He proceeded to conduct a roll call and verified a quorum was reached. All Senators except

Senator Hocker were marked present at the time of roll call. (Senator Hocker was present at 3:06 p.m.)

Senator Sokola entertained a motion to approve the committee's March 20, 2024 meeting minutes. Senator Pettyjohn made a motion and Senator Pinkney seconded. The committee's March 20th minutes were approved.

At 3:05 p.m. Senator Sokola began the Nomination portion of the agenda.

At 3:12 p.m. Senator Sokola moved to the Legislative portion of the agenda.

I. HB 24 w/ HA 1 (Longhurst) AN ACT TO AMEND TITLE 30 OF THE DELAWARE CODE RELATING TO CHARITABLE DONATIONS AND INCOME TAX RETURNS.

Synopsis: This Act creates a new charitable donation option on the Delaware income tax return. It allows taxpayers to direct a donation to the SL24: UnLocke the Light Foundation out of their state tax refund or in addition to the payment of owed tax. The Foundation works to educate the community to end the stigma, myths, and barriers surrounding mental health and to encourage productive conversations regarding mental health and wellness; provide uninsured and underinsured young people the means to get the critical and ongoing health services they need through the SL24 Mental Health Scholarship program; and provide access to trained Peer24 Team Members, Support Groups, and safe spaces like Sean's House and Sean's Rooms; The Act also removes the statutory limitation on the number of charitable funds that may be included on the income tax return.

HA 1 Synopsis: This Amendment restores the 21 charitable organization limit for the tax return and strikes an existing charitable donation option because that organization has been dissolved.

Senator Sokola asked Sen. Poore to introduce the bill.

Senator Poore said HB 24 w/ HA is the UnLocke the Light Foundation legislation. UnLocke the Light provides free mental health services to youth throughout New Castle County. They are currently in the process of expanding their much-needed services statewide. UnLocke the Light currently operates Sean's House in Newark, near the University of Delaware campus, The Warehouse in Wilmington, and Sean's Room at Saint Mark's High School which has received more than 24,000 visitors. Since its inception the foundation has trained over 100 peer support specialists have provided services to more than 100 young people experiencing active mental health crises. They also have provided scholarships to 22 uninsured and underinsured young people to ensure that they are able to receive critical mental health services. This bill adds the SL24 UnLocke the Light Foundation to the list of charitable organizations that taxpayers may choose to donate. This new funding source would advance foundations efforts to continue expanding their services to additional schools throughout the state.

Sen. Sokola thanked Sen. Poore and asked if she would like her guest to speak. Chris Locke was invited to come forward to offer testimony.

Chris Locke, founder, SL24 UnLocke the Light Foundation, stated that his son, Sean Locke was born and raised in Delaware, and unfortunately died in Delaware. Sean was blessed with many talents. He looked at many schools for college sports, but the University of Delaware was his first choice, where he played basketball. Sean loved Delaware and still loves Delaware. Many of you have thanked me for SL24 and the work it is doing. It's through your support and all the citizens of Delaware. It's the legacy of Sean that he left behind. Sean's greatest talent was that he was a best friend to so many. He had a gift to make you feel that you were the most important person in the room. He listened to you and showed empathy. His loss was felt throughout the state that he loved so much and SL24 was created in his memory, but really now it belongs to all the citizens of Delaware. We have honest conversations about mental illness, and it may be the first conversation that people have about mental illness, so they hopefully do not suffer in silence like Sean did. It has now been 2,178 days since we lost Sean to the disease of depression and anxiety. Suicide is a byproduct of those who suffer in silence with this disease. They try to self-medicate, and they never ask for help because they feel guilty or ashamed of the disease. When we created SL24, we decided early on to be an exclusive Delaware nonprofit committed to remove the stigma of mental illness. HB 24 is another step in our journey together to combat mental illness. It is time to get this win against mental illness and suicide. It is time to get this win, so families do not have to lose another loved one to suicide. I am extremely honored that SL24 will be the first mental health organization on the charitable organization.

Sen. Sokola thanked Mr. Locke and said he can't imagine the devastation he went through but could not admire more what he's done over the years and SL24 is making a difference. You don't know which young person will be impacted, but data will show that he's making a difference.

Senator Sokola asked if there were any questions or comments from committee members regarding HB 24.

Senator Sokola, seeing no members of the committee with questions about HB 24, asked if there was public comment. Seeing no public comment, Sen. Sokola said the bill will be circulated for committee member signatures.

****Please note: written submission of testimony in support of HB 24 was emailed to members of the committee prior to the 3/27/2024 meeting. This documentation is included in *Appendix B*.**

HB 24 w/ HA 1 – Reported out of the Committee: 6 Favorable (Sokola, Lockman, Pettyjohn, Hocker, Pinkney, McBride); 1 Merits (Townsend); 0 Unfavorable

- II. HB 315 (Wilson-Anton) AN ACT TO AMEND TITLE 9, TITLE 14, AND TITLE 31 OF THE DELAWARE CODE RELATING TO TECHNICAL CORRECTIONS.
Synopsis: This Act makes technical corrections to remove racist language and provisions from the Delaware Code. This Act also makes technical corrections to conform existing law to the standards of the Delaware Legislative Drafting Manual and the current responsibilities of Delaware agencies.

Senator Sokola noted that HB 315 is sponsored by Rep. Wilson-Anton and Sen. Pinkney, and asked Sen. Pinkney to offer comments regarding the bill.

Sen. Pinkney said this bill removes some racist language from the Code, as well as makes some technical corrections to conform the bill to existing standards in the legislative drafting manual. Essentially, it works to remove the terminology of colored people from the Code.

Sen. Sokola thanked Sen. Pinkney and commented that the bill is representative of a residual effect of a long history in the State. He recalled changes made to our State Constitution in the 1990s, when at that time the Constitution still had the words “separate schools for white and colored”. This was 40 years after Brown v Board of Education. He hopes HB 315 will complete corrections such as these that need to be made to our Code. He asked if there were any questions for Sen. Pinkney or comments on the bill from committee members.

Sen. Sokola, seeing no questions from committee members, asked if there was any public comment. Seeing no one signed up for public comment on HB 315, the bill was circulated for committee member signatures.

HB 315 – Reported out of the Committee: 5 Favorable (Sokola, Lockman, Pettyjohn, Hocker, Pinkney); 1 Merits (Townsend); 0 Unfavorable

Senator Sokola asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Senator McBride motioned to adjourn the committee meeting, and Senator Pettyjohn seconded the motion.

Senator Sokola, without objection, adjourned the meeting at 3:32 p.m.

Meeting Minute Preparation

Valerie McCartan, 4/15/2024

Approval of Meeting Minutes

Motion made by Sen. Pettyjohn; Seconded by Sen. Pinkney, Senate Executive Committee meeting, 4/17/2024

Appendix A

In-person sign-in sheet Attendees and Virtual Attendees

Attendees

Chris Locke, founder, SL24 UnLocke the Light Foundation (in person)
John Flaherty, Delaware Coalition for Open Government (virtual)

Appendix B

Written testimony submitted by email to committee members

1. Tynetta Brown, President & CEO, Philanthropy Delaware, Inc. Wilmington DE in support of HB 24.

2024 Board of Directors

Amy Walls (President)
Discover Bank

Dan Cruce (Vice-
President)
United Way of Delaware

April Birmingham
M & T Bank

Ashley Cook (Secretary)
Wells Fargo

Todd Veale (Treasurer)
*Laffey-McHugh
Foundation*

Mike DiPaolo
*Delaware Community
Foundation*

March 27, 2023

Senate Executive Committee
Delaware General Assembly
411 Legislative Avenue
Dover, DE 19901

**Re: Letter of Support for SL24: Unlocke the Light Foundation Charitable
Donation Option**

Members of the Senate Executive Committee,

On behalf of Philanthropy Delaware, Inc., I write to express support for House Bill 24. If passed, the legislation will create a new charitable donation option on Delaware income tax returns that will allow taxpayers to send a donation to the SL24: Unlocke the Light Foundation.

At Philanthropy Delaware, Inc. we work to strengthen the philanthropic sector in Delaware by bringing collaborative opportunities and education to individuals, corporations, and foundations who make significant charitable contributions in Delaware. We strongly support any opportunity to strengthen and streamline charitable giving opportunities across our state.

We also support the need to strengthen behavioral health resources for Delawareans in need. In recent years, we've seen a significant rise in the need for mental health treatment in services, especially for young Delawareans. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, youth suicide rates rose 62% between 2007 and 2021. Organizations like SL24 are fighting back to reduce the stigma and break down barriers to treatment. The resources they provide are educating our community and saving lives.

We appreciate your consideration of this bill and hope that you will support its passage.

Sincerely,



Tynetta Brown
President and CEO
Philanthropy Delaware, Inc.