

COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE
BUDGET HEARING

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

STATE CAPITOL
HARRISBURG, PENNSYLVANIA
ROOM 140, MAJORITY CAUCUS ROOM

MONDAY, MARCH 5, 2018
10:00 A.M.

BEFORE:

HONORABLE STANLEY SAYLOR, MAJORITY CHAIRMAN
HONORABLE JOSEPH MARKOSEK, MINORITY CHAIRMAN
HONORABLE KAREN BOBACK
HONORABLE SHERYL DELOZIER
HONORABLE GEORGE DUNBAR
HONORABLE GARTH EVERETT
HONORABLE KEITH GREINER
HONORABLE SETH GROVE
HONORABLE MARCIA HAHN
HONORABLE DOYLE HEFFLEY
HONORABLE SUE HELM
HONORABLE LEE JAMES
HONORABLE WARREN KAMPF
HONORABLE FRED KELLER
HONORABLE JASON ORTITAY
HONORABLE MIKE PEIFER
HONORABLE MARGUERITE QUINN
HONORABLE BRAD ROAE
HONORABLE JAMIE SANTORA
HONORABLE CURT SONNEY
HONORABLE KEVIN BOYLE
HONORABLE TIM BRIGGS
HONORABLE DONNA BULLOCK
HONORABLE MADELEINE DEAN
HONORABLE MARIA DONATUCCI
HONORABLE MARTY FLYNN

*Pennsylvania House of Representatives
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania*

BEFORE: (Continued)

2 HONORABLE PATTY KIM
HONORABLE STEPHEN KINSEY
3 HONORABLE LEANNE KRUEGER-BRANEKY
HONORABLE MIKE O'BRIEN
4 HONORABLE MARK ROZZI
HONORABLE PETER SCHWEYER

5
NON-COMMITTEE MEMBERS

6 HONORABLE KATE HARPER
7 HONORABLE DAVE HICKERNELL
HONORABLE WILL TALLMAN
8 HONORABLE MIKE TOBASH
HONORABLE ERIC NELSON
9 HONORABLE BERNIE O'NEILL
HONORABLE KATHY RAPP
10 HONORABLE STEVE McCARTER
HONORABLE MIKE SCHLOSSBERG
11 HONORABLE MARK LONGIETTI
HONORABLE DAN MILLER
12 HONORABLE DAN FRANKEL

13 COMMITTEE STAFF PRESENT:

14 DAVID DONLEY
REPUBLICAN EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
15 RITCHIE LAFAVER
REPUBLICAN DEPUTY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
16
MIRIAM FOX
17 DEMOCRATIC EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
TARA TREES
18 DEMOCRATIC CHIEF COUNSEL

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TESTIFIERS

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SUBMITTED WRITTEN TESTIMONY

* * *

(See submitted written testimony and handouts online.)

P R O C E E D I N G S

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3 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: Good morning,
4 everyone. We'll get our hearing started this
5 morning.

6 I want to welcome Secretary Rivera,
7 Deputy Secretary Stem and Angela -- I'm sorry.

8 DIRECTOR MARIANO: That's okay.

9 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: I don't have
10 my glasses on. I can't read that far.

11 Danielle, I'm sorry.

12 DIRECTOR MARIANO: That's okay.

13 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: That's what
14 happens when I take my glasses off far too soon.

15 DIRECTOR MARIANO: We are confused a lot,
16 Angela and I.

17 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: I should have
18 known better. Angela doesn't wear glasses.

19 But anyway, Mr. Secretary, if you will --
20 if whoever is providing testimony would rise and
21 raise your right hand.

22 (Testifiers sworn en masse.)

23 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: Thank you,
24 Mr. Secretary.

25 My opening comments this morning are

1 basically, you know, providing a quality education
2 for our youth is one of the most important duties we
3 have in State government. It's in our Constitution.

4 All members of the General Assembly are
5 invested in ensuring that our schools have the
6 proper resources to educate our young people. Our
7 Caucus has been open to increase the spending on
8 education, but there needs to be accountability with
9 all of our dollars we spend in the State budget.

10 We must ensure that the money we
11 appropriate helps advance the goals of preparing our
12 young students to join the workforce. Simply
13 throwing more money at the current system cannot be
14 the answer. We must be willing to be innovative.

15 And the keyword there, as I keep saying,
16 in everything, is being innovative in today's
17 society if we're going to meet the demands of the
18 21st century. The facts are clear that pre-K to 12
19 education line items are currently on record levels
20 and that's because of the General Assembly, both
21 Democrats and Republicans here in the General
22 Assembly.

23 It's hard for the Governor to claim that
24 he's taking credit for this, because he hasn't yet
25 signed one of our budgets. Since this hearing will

1 be a full day, we are going to lay out that the
2 first part of our morning will be based upon higher
3 education. The second half, this afternoon at
4 1 o'clock, will be based on issues of pre-K to 12
5 education.

6 I'm asking members to stay on higher ed
7 this morning, and we will get to the pre-K to 12
8 education this afternoon. I'm asking members to,
9 again, stay on topic this morning so we can move
10 through.

11 I think it's easier for the public who
12 watches these hearings to follow it when we stay
13 focused on issues. Members on both sides can follow
14 each other up with questions, and we are staying
15 assimilated on the page.

16 With that, Representative Markosek, any
17 comments?

18 MINORITY CHAIRMAN MARKOSEK: Yes. Thank
19 you, Chairman.

20 Good morning, Secretary. Good morning to
21 the staff that's here also.

22 The Department of Education, one of the
23 -- I guess pretty close, if not the biggest part of
24 the budget, General Fund budget that we have is
25 funding education, both higher education and basic

1 education and special ed and all of the other things
2 that go with it.

3 You know, over the years, we've all here
4 in the General Assembly struggled to get more money
5 for education. I think, as the Chairman said, we
6 have done that. It's also important to realize that
7 we have other expenses, such as pension costs, that
8 have -- not just the Department of Education --
9 affected all of our departments here.

10 And a lot of what we do spend on a lot of
11 departments, including the Department of Ed, has to
12 do a lot with not only the, not so much the cost of
13 the current pension, but rather the debt that we
14 have with our pension. So I think that has to be
15 considered any time we're talking about additional
16 money for education and the kind of money that we're
17 currently spending on education.

18 You know, my question -- I have some
19 questions that I'll defer till later because they're
20 dealing more with basic ed. And I know, as the
21 Chairman mentioned, we're focusing on higher ed this
22 morning. So I'll save my questions for later for
23 the basic ed part. Thank you.

24 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: I do want to
25 recognize that we've been joined this morning by

1 members that are not on our Committee, but are here
2 to observe the Hearing this morning. We have the
3 Chairman of the House Education Committee,
4 Dave Hickernell, with us, Representative Bernie
5 O'Neill and Representative Kate Harper. We have
6 Representative Longietti, Representative Schlossberg
7 and Representative Carter.

8 I believe I've gotten everybody. With
9 that, we'll move to our first questioner, which is
10 Representative Hahn.

11 REPRESENTATIVE HAHN: Thank you,
12 Mr. Chairman. Good morning.

13 SECRETARY RIVERA: Good morning.

14 REPRESENTATIVE HAHN: Thanks for coming
15 in today. I'm going to start with the community
16 education councils. I see the Governor's budget
17 recommends level funding, a little over \$2.3 million
18 for that.

19 Can you remind us what the education
20 councils are for and how they fit into the
21 Commonwealth's higher education system?

22 SECRETARY RIVERA: Sure. In terms of
23 community education councils, looking specifically
24 at the work that community colleges do as they
25 engage in their capital expenditures and the like.

1 So the Governor has recognized through this year's
2 budget --

3 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR:

4 Mr. Secretary, I'm going to ask you to
5 bring the mike closer so that they can hear you on
6 the cameras --

7 SECRETARY RIVERA: Absolutely.

8 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: -- and the
9 stenographer can hear you.

10 SECRETARY RIVERA: The first half of this
11 morning being aligned to higher education and our
12 vision and the investments being made in higher
13 education, community colleges continue to be a
14 significant partner in ensuring a number of things,
15 as far as that we continue to engage local
16 communities and reinforce a skilled workforce moving
17 forward, as we work through the attainment of an
18 industry certificate, two-year degree or a four-year
19 degree.

20 Through community colleges, we understand
21 that quite often they have to -- they seek or look
22 to be provided some additional resources around
23 capital campaigns to align the tools, the labs and
24 the opportunities they're creating on campus to
25 business and industry needs. The increase in this

1 area, you know, would specifically allow community
2 colleges to access funding, you know, to align their
3 resources on site, to align campuses, and also to
4 look towards expansion of any areas that may not
5 currently have access to those resources.

6 REPRESENTATIVE HAHN: Okay. But I think
7 the community colleges -- and I know the ones in my
8 area that have contacted me -- they were requesting
9 additional funding for their operating and not the
10 capital.

11 So is there a specific reason it's going
12 to capital?

13 If the community colleges need it for
14 operational, why are we not funding that way?

15 SECRETARY RIVERA: Specifically, looking
16 at the increase in operating expenses across the
17 board, we know that there were some difficult
18 decisions that had to be made. And over the course
19 of the past three years, the General Assembly and
20 the Governor have made significant investments in
21 higher education and education across the board.

22 So yes, it is recommended that a flat
23 fund for some higher ed institutions, as they relate
24 to general operating funds, you know, by no means is
25 it an indictment to their programs, but we also have

1 to understand there were limited resources to
2 allocate.

3 But we also understood, as we're working
4 towards a college and career-ready workforce, we had
5 to provide some investments. And we realized -- and
6 from what we hear from community colleges, that's
7 one way to allow them to update their campuses, labs
8 and geographic footprint to better engage the
9 workforce.

10 REPRESENTATIVE HAHN: Is there a way for
11 them to take the capital money -- they're not
12 expanding anything if they're up and running. And I
13 know Northampton Community College does a great job
14 by bringing in new programs when they're needed in
15 the area.

16 So if they don't need it, though, for
17 capital, are they going to be losing money that way?

18 Are they not going to have the additional
19 dollars they need for operating?

20 I guess I just don't understand if --

21 SECRETARY RIVERA: Sure.

22 REPRESENTATIVE HAHN: -- they don't want
23 them, why there's money there.

24 SECRETARY RIVERA: Well, I wouldn't say
25 they don't want the capital money. They definitely

1 want the capital money.

2 But I do think almost every community
3 college across the Commonwealth is investing in
4 terms of the updating of labs, you know, looking at
5 new technologies, trying to identify efficiencies
6 within what they already have. And there's, you
7 know, an opportunity for them to leverage capital
8 dollars to bring down costs and expenses, you know,
9 as it relates to a maybe outdated lab or outdated
10 infrastructure. And that money saved can then be
11 used to reinvest in their general operating budget.

12 So first, please, you know, I'm
13 absolutely not being coy in the question. We
14 advocate for more funding for all of our systems of
15 education. We also realize at the Department of Ed,
16 in doing so, you know, resources funding is limited.
17 So first, of course, in understanding there are
18 limited resources, we try to, you know, align and
19 assess some of the highest priority areas, but we
20 also know that there are opportunities.

21 So for example, community colleges, you
22 know, through improved infrastructure, they can save
23 money that can go to their general operating budget.
24 The other areas we're really incentivizing heavily
25 are dual enrollment opportunities. Community

1 colleges are one of our biggest dual enrollment
2 partners. So by working with their local K-12
3 system, they not only increase their student count,
4 their ADM, but they can find resources and
5 additional funding by partnering with their K-12.

6 We're working with the DCED to provide
7 grants through Economic Development. So what I can
8 have a little more discretion over is providing
9 opportunities for them to think outside the box and
10 generate additional revenue, and we'll continue to
11 do so.

12 REPRESENTATIVE HAHN: Okay. I see my
13 time is up --

14 SECRETARY RIVERA: I'm sorry.

15 REPRESENTATIVE HAHN: -- but maybe we'll
16 do a follow-up.

17 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

18 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: Representative
19 Bullock.

20 REPRESENTATIVE BULLOCK: Thank you,
21 Mr. Chairman.

22 Before I ask my questions, Mr. Chairman,
23 just a point of clarity.

24 Does the focus on higher education also
25 include adult educational programs?

1 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: It does, yes.

2 REPRESENTATIVE BULLOCK: Thank you.

3 Mr. Secretary, how are you doing today?

4 SECRETARY RIVERA: Good. Good morning.

5 REPRESENTATIVE BULLOCK: Earlier -- well,
6 actually, last year, we had the opportunity to visit
7 an adult welding program in my district, not too far
8 from where you grew up, as well. And it was a great
9 experience to see the type of programming that was
10 going on there, particularly around STEM education
11 and services that were provided to these young
12 adults.

13 Can you talk a little bit about the
14 career and technical education program budget and
15 increase in that particular area and what it can do
16 for our Commonwealth?

17 SECRETARY RIVERA: Absolutely. As we
18 look at -- specifically looking at some of the
19 career and technical education increases, the
20 Governor is recommending specific increases aligned
21 to the career and technical education formula.

22 I'll leave that for K-12, but as part of
23 that, we're looking at engaging and investing in an
24 initiative that the Governor has identified as PA
25 Smart. That initiative will allow us to use funding

1 to leverage the work of the Department of Education,
2 Economic Development, Labor & Industry.

3 It was interesting, you and I had an
4 amazing opportunity to meet with, you know,
5 students, adults that were reengaging in the
6 workforce, some of which having been welders, for
7 example, all their lives, but now learning how to
8 weld through new technology and equipment, and that
9 really hit home for us.

10 You know, as a result of feedback like
11 that, the Governor convened what we identified as
12 the Middle Class Task Force. I had an opportunity
13 to participate, along with my colleagues at L&I and
14 DCED, but probably most impactful and important, we
15 had the President of the Chamber, the State Chamber,
16 the AFL-CIO Workforce Investment Board, as well as
17 higher ed representatives.

18 We heard across the Commonwealth the
19 stories that you and I heard when we visited the
20 training center, the need to be connective, the need
21 to really take a look at the specific quality of
22 life issues folks are dealing with.

23 So the Governor really took, you know,
24 what we heard across the Commonwealth, and what you
25 and I heard, to heart and wanted to utilize some

1 dollars to leverage better partnerships between
2 agencies under the Administration to provide greater
3 opportunities to build programs like the training
4 institute we visited, but not only in our large
5 urban centers, but also to focus on some of the
6 rural centers that have nothing.

7 REPRESENTATIVE BULLOCK: Thank you,
8 Mr. Secretary.

9 I have no further questions.

10 SECRETARY RIVERA: Thank you.

11 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: Representative
12 Greiner.

13 REPRESENTATIVE GREINER: Thank you,
14 Mr. Chairman.

15 Good morning, Mr. Secretary.

16 SECRETARY RIVERA: Good morning.

17 REPRESENTATIVE GREINER: I wanted to
18 switch back to these community colleges and the
19 post-secondary funding. There seemed to be a
20 disconnect to me with the Governor's budget address.

21 And then when you review the budget, it
22 largely calls for no increases across the board for
23 higher education appropriations, other than our
24 State System. You know, and that ends up being an
25 increase of \$15 million or about 3.3 percent to

1 \$468 million.

2 I guess what I'm wondering, in light of
3 what I heard him say in his budget address about
4 career and technical education -- and of course, I
5 do want to circle back to community colleges
6 again -- why would we single out the State System to
7 receive these funds?

8 What's the thought process there?

9 SECRETARY RIVERA: So I think it's not a
10 matter of singling out. I want to be more mindful
11 of my time, so I won't share again the difficult
12 decisions that had to be made in terms of the
13 specific line item investments, but what we do
14 realize is, in terms of our State System schools,
15 state-related schools and community colleges, they
16 provide a significant and tremendous resource to all
17 communities across the Commonwealth.

18 We're also continuing to make a case
19 around specific options towards alignment of
20 industry certificates, two-year degrees and
21 four-year degrees. So first, we did recommend an
22 investment for the State System of Higher Education.
23 There was a recommendation around flat funding for
24 community colleges and our State System -- our
25 state-related colleges.

1 You know, I think, first and foremost, it
2 was about utilizing the resources that are
3 available. And you know, of course, I know as we
4 have, we always will continue to advocate and make
5 ourselves available to working with the General
6 Assembly around, you know, further recommendations
7 for local institutions. But when, you know, we
8 looked specifically at that investment in higher ed,
9 you know, the resources didn't exist to just look at
10 significant increases across the board.

11 REPRESENTATIVE GREINER: I would like to
12 look at performance outcomes. I look at the career
13 and I look at the technical schools, and it's been
14 positive. We try to get young people, and even
15 older people, to community colleges.

16 And there just seems to be -- all I'm
17 going to say is, maybe our State System needs to
18 tighten up its belt and needs to look at things,
19 when you have a couple of colleges that probably
20 should be closing inside the State System. And I
21 think that maybe they need to be tightening their
22 belt. That's just my thought process when looking
23 at this.

24 Now, switching back to the community
25 colleges -- I have HACC in my district, the

1 Lancaster campus -- and my colleague before
2 mentioned this. If you get operating dollars, they
3 can use that for capital items. However, they can't
4 use those capital dollars -- but it can't be flipped
5 the other way.

6 I mean, that's the way that it works.
7 And our community colleges were in last week. They
8 want flexibility.

9 Why wouldn't we want to give them that
10 flexibility and give those additional dollars
11 through operating?

12 Is there a specific project that maybe
13 we've identified or earmarked, you know, at one of
14 the community colleges to get that capital increase?

15 Maybe it's singled out for one or two
16 community colleges. I mean, I guess that's what
17 we're trying to identify as the Appropriations
18 Committee. Maybe you can provide some insight on
19 that.

20 SECRETARY RIVERA: As far as we're
21 concerned in the Department of Education, we don't
22 single out and identify. We work through a process
23 to, you know, allow community colleges to make the
24 case around where capital investments need to be
25 made. And then we work through our Department of

1 Education to allocate those funds.

2 REPRESENTATIVE GREINER: Like I said, we
3 heard the budget address, we saw the budget, there
4 just appears to be a disconnect to me.

5 Now, let me follow up also, too. Getting
6 back to the State System and their schools that are
7 struggling. You go -- you look at all of the
8 education providers throughout the Commonwealth,
9 whether it's a school like Stevens or HACC or
10 Penn State or Pitt or whatever, and they're fighting
11 against the demographic trends that are largely
12 beyond their control.

13 I mean, there are simply fewer
14 traditional-aged high school students to go around.
15 And considering the landscape in Pennsylvania, you
16 know, we have Pitt and Penn State that I know have
17 branch campuses.

18 Are there just simply too many enrollment
19 slots now?

20 You know, you see with our State schools,
21 there's declining enrollment.

22 Are we doing something at the State --
23 are you doing something to help bring this together,
24 maybe to help solve this problem or say, hey, we've
25 got to work more intelligently to figure out what

1 we're doing here rather than continually funding
2 and --

3 SECRETARY RIVERA: Yeah.

4 REPRESENTATIVE GREINER: -- doing what we
5 need to do?

6 SECRETARY RIVERA: Absolutely.

7 So as a Department, we're doing -- we're
8 engaging very heavily in terms of the alignment from
9 K-12 through higher education in the workforce.

10 First, I think I understand part of your
11 conversation around the consolidation, do we need
12 branch campuses and community colleges and State
13 System colleges?

14 In the Department, we are not -- we
15 started to engage in a conversation with the
16 General Assembly early on in my tenure around, you
17 know, the redundancy of higher ed options. And I
18 learned quickly in, you know, the conversation that
19 we've had with the General Assembly, we learned
20 really quickly, stay out of heavily local controlled
21 State and trying to identify who should exist within
22 that space.

23 I just -- altruistically, I tried to look
24 at it from a pure academic standpoint and realized I
25 wasn't going anywhere, nor would I be able to

1 accomplish any real movement. But what we have
2 done, we understand, you know, that there are some
3 amazing opportunities for the students in the
4 Commonwealth that go on to higher ed institutions.

5 And I'm going to just speak really
6 quickly, but we know that the vast majority of
7 Commonwealth graduates -- and you know our
8 graduation rate is increasing, and you nailed it --
9 go on to state-related, State-type institutions. We
10 also know that the greater majority of those
11 individuals tend to not want to travel more than 40
12 miles from home.

13 We also know that over 60 percent of jobs
14 are going to require some type -- in the next 10
15 years, 60 percent of jobs are going to require some
16 type of industry certificate, two-year degree or
17 four-year degree. Yet, the current percentage is
18 only 40 percent of Commonwealth residents meet the
19 degree standards, the certificate standards, that
20 are going to be needed in the next decade.

21 So knowing those facts, we realize we
22 have to look at, you know, the transition to
23 programs differently. Really quickly, and maybe
24 I'll have an opportunity to share this later, but
25 dual enrollment opportunities are extremely

1 important. Looking at -- and we're incentivizing
2 that through Future Ready PA.

3 Looking at credit articulation programs,
4 where high schools and colleges and universities can
5 share credits, Johnstown has an amazing program,
6 where, you know, a few hundred of their kids are now
7 graduating with associate degrees in hand.

8 So kids are being exposed to their local
9 colleges and universities earlier on. We want to
10 see more programs like that exist. And for that, we
11 need a new localized higher education option.

12 REPRESENTATIVE GREINER: I thank you for
13 your time. All I'm going to say is, I do think we
14 might have to reshuffle the deck where dollars go
15 with post-secondary.

16 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

17 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: I wanted to
18 recognize that Representative Tallman has joined us,
19 as well. He's not on the Committee, but here to
20 observe.

21 We will go to the next questioner, which
22 is Representative Krueger-Braneky.

23 REPRESENTATIVE KRUEGER-BRANEKY: Thank
24 you, Mr. Chairman.

25 Thank you, Secretary, for joining us here

1 today.

2 Knowing that this morning's topic is on
3 higher education, I'll reserve my questions about
4 pre-K for this afternoon, but I want to talk about
5 sexual harassment and assault on campuses.

6 This is a very hot issue in the Capitol
7 right now. There have been 11 bills introduced so
8 far in the House and five bills introduced in the
9 Senate, mostly by women of the House and Senate, to
10 deal with the issues of harassment and assault in a
11 broader way. Six of those bills have been referred
12 to the Education Committee, and they mostly deal
13 with harassment and assault at our institutions of
14 higher education.

15 So my first question for you, the General
16 Assembly has appropriated support for the It's On Us
17 Campaign. I know this is something that the
18 Governor has been very vocal on.

19 Can you talk about how that initiative is
20 going, who received those grants and what kind of
21 outcomes we've seen to date?

22 SECRETARY RIVERA: Absolutely.

23 First, I want to thank the General
24 Assembly and thank you for your support in
25 addressing the issue of sexual assault on campus and

1 ensuring, you know, that sexual assault and, you
2 know, sexual violence is not part of any student's
3 higher education experience.

4 First, I think we're extremely proud,
5 both through legislative perspective, as well as
6 being a member of the administration. And
7 Pennsylvania is one of the few and one of the first
8 states to adopt the It's On Us PA statewide
9 campaign. And over the course of the past two
10 years, being able to invest upwards of \$2 million to
11 engage in a number of initiatives on college
12 campuses and looking at both partnerships with K-12
13 institutions first.

14 You know, I think it's important for me
15 to share numbers. We have impacted, you know, the
16 lives of well over 100,000, you know, individuals on
17 college campuses across the Commonwealth.

18 We've really chipped away at the stigma
19 for those who want to report or may have been
20 bystanders on this issue by better informing
21 colleges and campuses and victims and those who are
22 a witness of a crime around the barriers to
23 reporting that crime. We've also been much more
24 mindful in creating safe space, both socially and
25 emotionally, and actual physical safe space, in

1 colleges and campuses throughout this campaign.

2 I was trying to flip through to find the
3 page of the list of recipients quickly, but I don't
4 want to spend too much time doing that. But you
5 know, I will absolutely forward the list of grant
6 recipients to the General Assembly.

7 But I do have to share, over the course
8 of the past two years, and we look to continue to
9 change the narrative, you know, around sexual
10 assault. First, make it clear it's not acceptable
11 and will not be tolerated. Secondly, we understand
12 we have to make a -- create a safe space for
13 victims. And lastly, we have to counsel, you know,
14 students on college campuses and K-12 institutions
15 around what's right and what's not right and what's
16 healthy behavior and what's not healthy behavior,
17 both for those who might engage in the behavior, but
18 also for those who are witnessing the behavior, so
19 they're much more likely to stand up, report and
20 hopefully stop and engage aggressively.

21 REPRESENTATIVE KRUEGER-BRANEKY: So a
22 follow-up question; you said we've impacted the
23 lives of over 100,000 people.

24 Are those people who have been educated
25 or people who've actually reported harassment or

1 assault?

2 SECRETARY RIVERA: So those are people
3 that have been educated.

4 REPRESENTATIVE KRUEGER-BRANEKY: Okay.

5 SECRETARY RIVERA: I want to say upwards
6 of 80,000-plus students have engaged already through
7 the program. And then, it's also those who are
8 facilitating, you know, the programs, which is
9 upwards of almost 20,000 individuals who have been
10 facilitating the grants in the process.

11 REPRESENTATIVE KRUEGER-BRANEKY: And do
12 you, Mr. Secretary, have any statistics on how many
13 incidents of assault have been reported on our
14 college campuses?

15 SECRETARY RIVERA: Not off the top of my
16 head. That's absolutely a number I don't want to
17 misspeak, but I'll absolutely forward that along.

18 REPRESENTATIVE KRUEGER-BRANEKY: That
19 would be very helpful. One of the things that we've
20 learned as we've dived into this issue here is that
21 even getting a victim or survivor to the point of
22 being willing to report takes a lot of support. So
23 I'd be curious to know those statistics.

24 A follow-up question; these six bills
25 that have been so far introduced by members of the

1 House and referred to the Education Committee, have
2 you had a chance to take a look at any of these
3 bills?

4 SECRETARY RIVERA: So our team has
5 absolutely, you know, looked and identified some of
6 the alignment areas of the bills. This is something
7 that is personal and, you know, the Department of
8 Education is passionate about and will continue to
9 stand at the ready to inform and engage
10 appropriately.

11 REPRESENTATIVE KRUEGER-BRANEKY:
12 Wonderful. I know some of the bills have been
13 referred to the Labor Committee. The Majority
14 Chairman has pledged to hold a full-day hearing on
15 these bills this spring. I'm hoping that the
16 Majority Education Chair in the House will do the
17 same on the bills that have been referred to the
18 Education Committee.

19 SECRETARY RIVERA: And I thank you for
20 really taking this on and championing this cause. I
21 mean, you've been front and center. It's noticed
22 and greatly appreciated.

23 Thank you.

24 REPRESENTATIVE KRUEGER-BRANEKY: Well, I
25 think it's time for us to tell victims that we

1 believe them and we will fight for them here in this
2 Capitol or anywhere in the Commonwealth.

3 Thank you, Mr. Secretary.

4 SECRETARY RIVERA: Thank you.

5 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: Representative
6 Helm.

7 REPRESENTATIVE HELM: Thank you,
8 Mr. Chairman.

9 Secretary Rivera, up top.

10 SECRETARY RIVERA: We do this every year.

11 REPRESENTATIVE HELM: I would just like
12 to talk a little bit about libraries. For many
13 years, Pennsylvania libraries have faced declining
14 and stagnant funding from the State. The Governor's
15 proposal continues level funding into 2018-19.

16 However, several years ago, the libraries
17 launched the PA Forward Initiative, recognizing the
18 public is demanding greater efficiency and program
19 consolidation at all levels of government.

20 Can you tell us, from your perspective,
21 how the libraries have been faring with this
22 initiative and has it produced greater efficiencies?

23 SECRETARY RIVERA: As I sift through my
24 budget binder, I absolutely want to share some of
25 the highlights that the libraries have been engaging

1 in over the course of the past few years.

2 First, you know, their use of technology,
3 and as they've been engaging through technology,
4 they continue to find efficiencies within both the
5 State library system and local libraries, as well.

6 As I look specifically for the library
7 program, I do want to share a number of other
8 highlights. You know, first, I'll share the
9 highlights --

10 REPRESENTATIVE HELM: Okay.

11 SECRETARY RIVERA: -- and then I'll look
12 through my specific numbers.

13 You know, as a result of the leadership,
14 significant leadership on behalf of the
15 Department of Education, and our library alignment,
16 we've seen some real transition from traditional
17 aspects of libraries to libraries really embracing
18 science and technology, both locally and at the
19 State level.

20 First, I'm going to share something that
21 you normally share. I think it's important to, you
22 know, mention again publicly. They are a point of
23 contact and a point of reference for many of our
24 communities to ensure that they're engaged in
25 workforce opportunities, in the use of technology in

1 robust manners and also as they engage in literacy.

2 So just looking at the supports that we
3 put in libraries, currently, we're seeing a growth
4 of opportunities with them creating makerspaces in
5 around, you know, 10 percent of libraries across the
6 Commonwealth and growing; them engaging with
7 students over the summer to reduce the summer slide;
8 providing workforce through career pathways to
9 individuals who visit the libraries; and then also
10 they have been evolving to loan technologies, such
11 as tablets, computers, hotspots and the like, for
12 communities that may not have access to those
13 technologies.

14 So when we look at many of the
15 efficiencies that have been put in place through the
16 library system, they've been reutilizing those
17 dollars to help fill the gap, especially in many
18 areas that don't have -- that do not have access to,
19 you know, Wi-Fi connectivity or even job search and
20 job placement opportunities.

21 REPRESENTATIVE HELM: And is the State
22 library a part of the PA Forward Initiative?

23 SECRETARY RIVERA: I don't know,
24 specifically. I don't want to misspeak, but I'll
25 probably know that answer before we leave today.

1 Oh, it is? Okay.

2 REPRESENTATIVE HELM: It is, okay.

3 SECRETARY RIVERA: It is. That's why I
4 bring the experts with me.

5 REPRESENTATIVE HELM: I don't know if
6 you've been working directly with the counties, but
7 it seems like our county is like really pushing
8 libraries and coming up with new creative ideas for
9 people to be there.

10 SECRETARY RIVERA: We're seeing most
11 libraries really reimagining themselves. I had an
12 opportunity to visit a few libraries over the course
13 of my tenure here. I have to share with you, the
14 evolution has been amazing.

15 Two weeks ago, I had an opportunity to
16 visit a STEM Girls Initiative, where they had young
17 ladies at the State library creating a STEM project.
18 And you know, we know that as we look at the areas
19 of science, technology, engineering and math,
20 females, young girls are very underrepresented in
21 that space. And the library, you know, had taken it
22 upon themselves to host and to really encourage
23 girls to participate in the sciences and really on
24 -- so we're proud of the work that our libraries
25 have been engaging in. We'll continue to work to

1 support them the best way we can.

2 REPRESENTATIVE HELM: All right. Thank
3 you.

4 SECRETARY RIVERA: Thank you.

5 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: Representative
6 Markosek.

7 MINORITY CHAIRMAN MARKOSEK: Let me just
8 jump in here, since we brought up libraries. We
9 have an excellent library in my district, the
10 Plum Markosek Community Library --

11 SECRETARY RIVERA: I've been there.

12 MINORITY CHAIRMAN MARKOSEK: -- which
13 always needs more money, but I thought it was a good
14 -- this is just a tincture here of Chairman's
15 license, if you will.

16 Thank you.

17 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: I'm waiting
18 for the library in my name. I don't know, Joe. I
19 mustn't be here --

20 (Comment made off microphone by
21 unidentified individual.)

22 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: See how I get
23 treated.

24 Representative Dean, I'm going to you.
25 You're a lot nicer than he.

1 REPRESENTATIVE DEAN: I'm not thinking
2 about memorials. Here we go.

3 Good morning, Secretary and
4 administration. Welcome to all of you, and thank
5 you for your important work.

6 As you know, Mr. Secretary, I'm a former
7 teacher. I taught at La Salle University for 10
8 years. It was a wonderful experience before I came
9 to the legislature. So I love being on a college
10 campus, any college campus, helping kids and
11 watching young people claim their education.

12 Two areas that I wanted to ask you about.
13 They're different. And I think because of our time
14 constriction, I'm just going to put them out there
15 and you address them.

16 Number one is school safety. In the era
17 that we are in, and the tragic events of the
18 Parkland shooting --

19 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR:

20 Representative, I'm going to stop you
21 there a minute.

22 Are you talking about college or are you
23 talking about K-12?

24 REPRESENTATIVE DEAN: Every -- sadly, it
25 knows no boundaries, from Columbine to Parkland.

1 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: I know, but we
2 are -- we will save K-12 school safety for the
3 afternoon; college campuses now.

4 REPRESENTATIVE DEAN: Okay. Then this
5 will be college campuses, and I would ask this
6 question again in the afternoon for the young
7 children.

8 So college campus safety, specifically,
9 what is it that we know as a result of the
10 vulnerabilities of our students on campuses across
11 this State, across this country?

12 What challenges has that brought to your
13 Department?

14 And how can we as legislators and
15 appropriators help you in that effort and try to
16 protect our kids and diminish the fear that is just
17 being instilled in them because we have to do active
18 shooter drills and things like that?

19 So school safety is one. And it
20 certainly, in a separate way, is connected to what
21 Representative Krueger-Braneky was talking about in
22 terms of sexual assault on campuses. There are
23 other things.

24 The second one is very different; it's
25 the idea of affordability.

1 What can we do to make colleges, higher
2 ed or an associate's degree more affordable?

3 I was sitting around with a bunch of
4 young people who all have student loans. And I said
5 to them, for example, you know, what's the burden of
6 your student loan and what's the percentage?

7 They say, I don't even want to know what
8 the percentage is, it's such a burden, which is an
9 absurdity. You can buy a car for zero percent
10 interest. Kids are paying 12, 13 and more
11 percentage just on an education; it's ridiculous.

12 So school safety tip and affordability.

13 SECRETARY RIVERA: Absolutely.

14 So school safety now, I will try my best
15 to reserve it to -- just concentrate it as it
16 relates to higher ed, but we know that school safety
17 transcends. Well, safety in general, in terms of
18 conversations around safety, it transcends from
19 everything from early childhood centers all the way
20 through higher education, you know, looking at
21 libraries and safety, looking at offices and safety.

22 So you know, first, I will share, I
23 guess, a more global perspective. The narrative
24 around school safety has changed, and I will share
25 this with more specificity later, but we have to

1 look at safety in three ways. One, preventive and
2 what can be done before an actual incident; response
3 to the incident.

4 And you know one area that's also lost
5 quite often in education is what do we do after, you
6 know, after the incident and providing support and
7 social, emotional, mental help, you know, physical
8 support for individuals. College campuses, over the
9 course, unfortunately, they've been dealing with
10 this a little longer than some of the K-12
11 institutions, have put strong plans around safety
12 and security, responsiveness, communication, you
13 know, engagement in place across their campuses for
14 commuting populations.

15 You know, it's one of the areas that, you
16 know, one of the reasons why we continue to invest
17 in capital improvement opportunities, so that they
18 can continue to improve their infrastructure on site
19 and for, you know, their students. But we also know
20 that systems of communication are extremely
21 important, you know, the monitoring of social media,
22 having conversations with families and communities
23 around the workforce, building relationships between
24 their college campuses and local law enforcement if
25 they don't have their own contingent.

1 And so, you know, we continue to try to
2 do our best. The Department of Education has
3 helped, you know, reduce barriers to the
4 establishment of those relationships and the
5 documenting of best practice.

6 You know, I think through our Department
7 of Higher Education and through personal
8 relationships, we try our best to act as
9 ambassadors, you know, as it relates to working with
10 educational units and other agencies within the
11 Governor's purview. So for example, PEMA has the
12 hazardous toolkit, which provides a great resource
13 for agencies, you know, across the Commonwealth
14 working with State Police, working with Homeland
15 Security and the like. And we take on the position
16 of liaison and partner in those matters.

17 College affordability, you know, to share
18 quickly, it's one of the areas that probably is most
19 heartbreaking and, you know, difficult to engage in.
20 We also are looking at college affordability in
21 multifaceted ways. First, we get that college costs
22 have increased.

23 I'll take 30 quick seconds. College
24 costs have increased. You know, I hate to be the
25 person that kind of has to remind us firsthand.

1 There was a period of time, you know, for the better
2 part of three to four years, where colleges
3 significantly increased their expectation of family
4 payment because we, you know, the State did not
5 provide increases.

6 As a matter of fact, we decreased, you
7 know, the appropriations to colleges. And as a
8 result, families had to assume and absorb those
9 costs. But we also realized there are some factors
10 that we have control over in the Department.

11 We've engaged high school counselors and
12 college counselors to have better conversations
13 around college acceptance and high school graduation
14 articulation understanding, so that we're better
15 preparing students to transition from high school to
16 college, so that there aren't waste costs associated
17 with that transition.

18 You're going to hear of us engaging in a
19 15 to Finish Campaign. We realize one of the
20 biggest detriments, or one of the biggest, you know,
21 areas to create unaffordability or longitudinal debt
22 is that students aren't taking enough credits each
23 semester. So we're engaging in this national
24 campaign to ensure students know to take 15 credits
25 a semester to graduate on time, which will then

1 mitigate significant debt.

2 That's also one of the reasons why we're
3 investing so heavily around dual enrollment
4 opportunities, both for career and technical
5 education and for technical colleges and two-year
6 and four-year institutions. Allowing students to
7 take credits before they actually walk onto a
8 college campus, one, helps them align, you know, to
9 graduating on time.

10 And second, it exposes them to being able
11 to be successful in college earlier. And they're
12 more often -- research has shown that they're more
13 often to be successful and move on and succeed on a
14 college campus.

15 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: Representative
16 Roae.

17 REPRESENTATIVE ROAE: Thank you,
18 Mr. Chairman.

19 And thank you, Mr. Secretary.

20 All of us are concerned with the cost of
21 higher education. You know, we all want to make
22 sure that Pennsylvania residents have access to
23 quality, affordable higher education. And a lot of
24 students in Pennsylvania, you know, attend the State
25 System schools.

1 I was just wondering, could you tell us a
2 little bit about the recent union contract with the
3 APSCUF Union?

4 How much additional money is that going
5 to cost that system for the current fiscal year?

6 SECRETARY RIVERA: So I haven't broken
7 out specifically how much additional funding that is
8 going to cost, you know, the system, but I will
9 forward that information on and make it available to
10 you.

11 REPRESENTATIVE ROAE: Do you have an
12 estimate on how much it will cost?

13 SECRETARY RIVERA: I don't want to
14 misspeak on record, but I will absolutely forward it
15 to you.

16 REPRESENTATIVE ROAE: Now, are you on the
17 PASSHE Board?

18 SECRETARY RIVERA: I am on the PASSHE
19 Board.

20 REPRESENTATIVE ROAE: Okay. And did you
21 vote on the Union contract?

22 SECRETARY RIVERA: I did vote on the
23 Union contract.

24 REPRESENTATIVE ROAE: Did you vote for it
25 or against it?

1 SECRETARY RIVERA: I voted for the Union
2 contract.

3 REPRESENTATIVE ROAE: You don't know how
4 much more it's going to cost this fiscal year.

5 You voted for it without knowing what the
6 cost would be?

7 SECRETARY RIVERA: No, I voted for it
8 knowing what the cost would be. I had the contract
9 in front of me at the time.

10 REPRESENTATIVE ROAE: Okay.

11 SECRETARY RIVERA: I didn't bring the
12 contract with me today.

13 REPRESENTATIVE ROAE: Okay. Do you have
14 an estimate of what it is?

15 SECRETARY RIVERA: Again, I don't want to
16 speak in terms of the estimate. I don't want to
17 misspeak on public record, but I'll --

18 REPRESENTATIVE ROAD: Right.

19 SECRETARY RIVERA: -- make that
20 information available to you.

21 REPRESENTATIVE ROAE: Because the
22 Governor is requesting \$15 million of new funding
23 for the PASSHE System for the new fiscal year.

24 Would that \$15 million cover the full
25 cost of the increase in costs for this fiscal year

1 because of the new union contract or would it come
2 short of that?

3 SECRETARY RIVERA: Well, the \$15 million
4 being allocated to the PASSHE System is not directly
5 associated with a collective bargaining agreement.
6 You know, the --

7 REPRESENTATIVE ROAE: Hold on one second.
8 I thought about 70 percent of the PASSHE budget was
9 for salaries and benefits.

10 Aren't the salaries and benefits the main
11 part of the union contract?

12 SECRETARY RIVERA: Educational
13 institutions are employee-heavy. I mean --

14 REPRESENTATIVE ROAE: Right. Right.

15 SECRETARY RIVERA: -- you need a teacher
16 to teach a classroom. Without a teacher in front of
17 the classroom, you don't have --

18 REPRESENTATIVE ROAE: Right.

19 SECRETARY RIVERA: -- a classroom. So
20 that would be associated with salary and benefits.

21 REPRESENTATIVE ROAE: Okay. So the
22 \$15 million that the Governor is requesting, if we
23 do that, will that cover the higher cost of the
24 union contract?

25 SECRETARY RIVERA: Again, the allocation

1 we provide to the PASSHE System is inclusive of not
2 only salary and benefits but also programming that
3 exists within the higher ed institution as, you
4 know, most of our, all of our other budgets as they
5 relate to, you know, the support of education. So I
6 can't -- there is no direct correlation between one
7 dollar and that dollar going to a salary.

8 There is a correlation between a dollar
9 provided to the System of Higher Education and the
10 programs and campuses and services provided by the
11 higher ed institution.

12 REPRESENTATIVE ROAE: Okay. Well, maybe
13 for this afternoon -- are you coming to the hearing
14 in the afternoon, after lunch today?

15 SECRETARY RIVERA: I don't think I have a
16 choice, but yeah.

17 REPRESENTATIVE ROAE: Well, no, if you
18 could bring that number, you know, after lunch today
19 so we know how much money the new union contract
20 with the APSCUF Union is going to cost the PASSHE
21 colleges for the two thousand, you know, for this
22 new fiscal year, I'd appreciate that, if you could
23 bring that.

24 SECRETARY RIVERA: I'll try my best.
25 Absolutely.

1 REPRESENTATIVE ROAE: Well, I would like
2 a better commitment than that. I would like to know
3 that you'll know for sure that you can, you know --

4 SECRETARY RIVERA: Yeah. We'll be here.
5 I'm going to try to -- I'm sure one of the members
6 of my team is texting right now to the office to try
7 to make sure that information is available.

8 REPRESENTATIVE ROAE: Okay. Good.

9 A couple other questions about the
10 contract. I was looking at the contract. I guess
11 seven percent of the professors can be on paid
12 sabbatical leave at any given time.

13 Do you think that was a good part of the
14 contract to have seven percent of the employees not
15 there?

16 SECRETARY RIVERA: Sabbatical leaves are
17 part of the general working conditions that are
18 negotiated between an institution and, you know,
19 their labor and their collective bargaining unit. I
20 think, you know, when we're looking specifically --
21 so one, it seems to be a number that's commiserate
22 with what higher ed institutions across the
23 Commonwealth and the country are engaging in.

24 And ultimately, I think when you're
25 looking at a contract, a collective bargaining

1 agreement, you have to look at it in aggregate. I
2 mean, we understand, you know, it controls and it
3 provides conditions, general working conditions, for
4 all employees. We know those general working
5 conditions ultimately impact the quality of
6 education in the institution.

7 We know that the quality of education in
8 the institution is the primary factor in attracting,
9 retaining -- recruiting, attracting, retaining
10 students and families to participate on that campus,
11 so it's a bigger picture, I think, as with anything
12 in the workforce.

13 You look at what the cost of the
14 workforce is. You look at the quality of the
15 product. And then you look at, you know, trying to
16 produce that project and generate revenue
17 accordingly.

18 If you don't have a strong workforce,
19 then that's going to have a negative impact on the
20 students you can attract going onto your campuses.
21 Then if you have a significant decline in the number
22 of students and families you're serving, that's
23 going to impact revenue, as well. So it's --
24 there's no -- it's not a binary conversation or
25 answer. It's really one that's imbedded, you know,

1 a much more nuanced organization of higher
2 education.

3 REPRESENTATIVE ROAE: All right. Well,
4 my time is up.

5 Thank you, Mr. Secretary.

6 And I'm looking forward to hearing that
7 number after lunch today. Thank you.

8 SECRETARY RIVERA: Absolutely.

9 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: Representative
10 Kinsey.

11 REPRESENTATIVE KINSEY: Thank you,
12 Mr. Chairman.

13 Good morning, Mr. Secretary,
14 Deputy Secretary, and Director. Welcome to our
15 hearings.

16 Mr. Secretary, I think that just hearing
17 my colleague speak about union contracts, I, too,
18 look forward to robust discussions this afternoon to
19 talk about the importance of the collective
20 bargaining agreement, as well as the general working
21 conditions, the cost, quality and the impact that it
22 has on future generations of Pennsylvanians.

23 But for right now, I want to shift the
24 topic to a comment that the Governor made. The
25 Governor made a commitment to promote schools that

1 teach and jobs that pay.

2 There was a recommendation from the
3 Middle Class Task Force, in which the Governor
4 announced a new \$50 million investment in workforce
5 and education initiatives. The new initiative
6 focused on STEM and apprenticeship programs.

7 And since we're talking about
8 post-secondary education, can you speak towards the
9 new initiative in regards to the number of
10 Pennsylvanians that would be impacted by the STEM
11 training programs, as well as you might have
12 information in regards to, each year, how many new
13 partnerships are developed through the
14 Industry Partnership Program, as well as new
15 partnerships between employers and colleges and
16 universities in regards to that agreement with the
17 \$50 million?

18 And then also, I don't know if you have
19 information, since it's a new initiative, in regards
20 to the potential or the expected or the estimated
21 enrollment in the apprenticeship programs and the
22 overall impact it will have in regards to employment
23 opportunities, as well as new employments here in
24 Pennsylvania.

25 SECRETARY RIVERA: First, I think one of

1 the points of pride for us in the administration,
2 and this has been really, you know, the collective
3 work of the General Assembly and the administrator,
4 has been the support, and as a result of that
5 support, the increase in the number of
6 Pennsylvanians that have participated in
7 apprenticeship programs.

8 So we have absolutely seen an increase in
9 those partnerships and opportunities; however, that
10 increase still is not enough to fill the growing
11 demand of high skill industry needs. You know, we
12 learned pretty aggressively. This is something that
13 we can admittedly say we knew this was a trend, as
14 research showed, there's going to be that increased
15 demand that we knew the Commonwealth, just as, you
16 know, Pennsylvania has been growing, the industry
17 has been growing, there was going to be significant
18 need, you know, for both an informed and increased
19 technical workforce.

20 But what we really learn and what, you
21 know, was evident when we engaged across the
22 Commonwealth through the Middle Class Task Force was
23 that we need a greater connection between agencies.
24 L&I, DCED and the Department of Education could do a
25 much better job with aligning resources, aligning

1 vision, you know, with ensuring that early childhood
2 through workforce continuum.

3 So I could share with you, there aren't
4 specific programs that have launched, but there are
5 specific programs that we're looking at that will
6 impact everything that you just shared. First, the
7 increase in the number of apprenticeships, you know,
8 made available through job training to the residents
9 of the Commonwealth, you know, starting as soon as
10 the budget is adopted and we move forward towards
11 PA Smart.

12 Secondly, looking at more aligned
13 partnerships with higher education and workforce and
14 business and industry leaders. You know, we --
15 there's currently an expectation that our higher ed
16 institutions ensure they're preparing the next
17 generation of workforce and they're meeting the
18 growing demands of business and industry, but under
19 the Governor's direction, we're going to be working
20 explicitly to make sure that higher ed is hearing
21 directly from Labor & Industry and DCED on what
22 those on-demand and future needs are.

23 Lastly, when we look at, specifically,
24 providing opportunities for adult basic education,
25 but also as it aligns to the creation and the

1 opportunity to create industry-type certificates,
2 the Department of Labor & Industry and the
3 Department of Education can definitely work a little
4 better together to imbed and infuse technical
5 opportunities, technical training to our adult basic
6 training, to our career and technical education
7 centers, you know, to our two-year and certificate
8 granting institutions.

9 And that's something that we've already
10 started discussing, to grow and, you know, improve.

11 REPRESENTATIVE KINSEY: Great.

12 Well, Mr. Secretary, I look forward to
13 the continued growth and opportunities. I just want
14 to say thank you to you and your team for being
15 here.

16 Thank you very much.

17 SECRETARY RIVERA: Thank you, sir.

18 REPRESENTATIVE KINSEY: Thank you,
19 Mr. Chairman.

20 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: Before I move
21 on to the next questioner, I wanted to represent --
22 yeah, represent -- I wanted to recognize
23 Representative Dan Miller for also appearing at the
24 hearings today, who is not a member of the
25 Appropriations Committee.

1 We will move on to the next questioner,
2 who is Representative Kampf.

3 REPRESENTATIVE KAMPF: Mr. Secretary,
4 over here. Yeah. Right.

5 Just asking about SARA, State
6 Authorization Reciprocity Agreement. This is
7 essentially online access across State borders. My
8 questions are kind of broad.

9 Have any of our schools signed up for
10 SARA?

11 How is that going?

12 I guess there are some resources that are
13 made available to your Department, perhaps, by the
14 institutions that sign up.

15 What are those resources being used for?

16 SECRETARY RIVERA: So SARA -- and
17 actually, I appreciate the question. We actually
18 haven't spoken of SARA in the better part of a year.

19 I remember us making the recommendation,
20 moving forward, and then, you know, having to
21 facilitate the process, which was a highly engaged
22 process.

23 What I can share with you -- and some of
24 it will be anecdotal until I'm able to pull the
25 specific numbers, but the moment we signed on to

1 SARA, we had a significant number, maybe even a
2 national leading number of higher ed institutions
3 signing on to become part of the credit and degree
4 articulation agreement.

5 So we know, first, the program has been a
6 success for the Commonwealth in terms of creating
7 those partnerships and establishing that
8 articulation with other States, something that, you
9 know, we heard was much needed, but we saw firsthand
10 with the quick growth of agreement across states,
11 that it was the right move.

12 I can share with you that the fees
13 associated with SARA, you know, if not all, the
14 highest percentage of those fees go to just
15 facilitating the process of, you know, degree and
16 credit articulation between higher ed institutions
17 in the country. You know, one of the things that we
18 realize -- and I'll give you one really good reason
19 why we wanted to invest in an initiative like SARA.

20 We currently have 1.4 million
21 Commonwealth residents that have over 20 credits and
22 no college degree. We see that as an untapped
23 resource, to really identify individuals that can
24 work towards industry certificate attainment,
25 two-year degree or four-year degree.

1 Kim.

2 REPRESENTATIVE KIM: Good morning,
3 Secretary and team.

4 SECRETARY RIVERA: Good morning.

5 REPRESENTATIVE KIM: We hear about high
6 school dropout numbers.

7 My question is, do we have any college
8 dropout numbers?

9 From the small area that I represent,
10 I've known some stories where kids go. They're the
11 first college student in their family. They may be
12 from impoverished areas. They go for a year and
13 then they leave, and it makes me so sick because
14 they had a chance.

15 I mean, it's up to the college student, I
16 get it, but they also have debt and no college
17 degree. You talked a little bit about 15 -- was it
18 Fight for 15?

19 Is this a problem or is this just my
20 area?

21 And what are we doing?

22 I should have asked the college
23 administrators when they were here, the community
24 college folks, but is there any support group that
25 once they're there, they're there for the whole time

1 and they come out successful?

2 What are your thoughts on that,
3 Mr. Secretary?

4 SECRETARY RIVERA: So it's not a local
5 problem. It's not just your problem. First, it's a
6 national issue.

7 REPRESENTATIVE KIM: Okay.

8 SECRETARY RIVERA: But it's definitely
9 absolutely an issue that impacts us here in
10 Pennsylvania and in the Commonwealth. You know, I
11 shared with you some of the K-12 higher ed
12 articulation programs that are taking place to try
13 to reduce the number of students who are stopping
14 out and dropping out. You know, there are a number
15 of factors, you know, that come into play.

16 First, we know that through conversation
17 with our partners in community college, you know,
18 employment raids with the increase and decrease of,
19 you know, available employment, it impacts who is
20 going to school and who is not going to school,
21 especially with our adult learners or
22 non-traditional learners.

23 We also realize the alignment of, you
24 know, not only the students who don't have a support
25 system in place for continuation, but the number of

1 students who don't see a trajectory towards, you
2 know, gainful employment and not realizing what
3 they're going to do. So through Success by 15 or
4 through Graduate PA or the engagement between the
5 counselors and -- I misspoke in terms of the name --
6 the counselor, higher ed counselor symposium, where,
7 you know we're looking to address that issue.

8 Through Future Ready PA, we have a
9 college and career alignment expectation. So how
10 students are exposing earlier on the college to help
11 reduce, you know, that dropout or stop-out number,
12 but we do track that information now.

13 Actually, you know, Matt and his team,
14 under this administration, have started tracking the
15 information through the college clearinghouse. So
16 we're tracking not only percentage, but where
17 they're going and, you know, where they're -- as
18 they transition from institution to institution.

19 And we're actually under, you know, not
20 specifically part of PA Smart, but what we've
21 learned through the Governor's initiative on the
22 Middle Class Task Force, we're trying to work with
23 our partners from other agencies to not only track
24 who is going through college and whether they're
25 completing or not within, you know, five years, six

1 years and beyond, but whether or not they're going
2 on to earn gainful employment. We really want to
3 take the data set to the next level.

4 So we're tracking up to college. We're
5 actually now working to find a way to track after
6 college and to the workforce.

7 REPRESENTATIVE KIM: Thank you for being
8 on top of that. No further questions.

9 Thank you.

10 SECRETARY RIVERA: Thank you.

11 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: Representative
12 Delozier.

13 REPRESENTATIVE DELOZIER: Thank you,
14 Mr. Chairman.

15 Thank you for being here, Secretary, and
16 answering some of the questions and clarifications.
17 I was going for some clarification on the issue of
18 the sexual assaults on campus that have been brought
19 up.

20 You gave some overviews as to what was
21 used. At this point, there's been \$2 million that
22 has been dedicated and you're asking for another
23 million within the budget. For '16-'17 and '17-'18,
24 my understanding, in reading the testimony, it went
25 to 63 schools.

1 Can you tell me how those schools, just
2 those schools, received the dollars?

3 SECRETARY RIVERA: Sure.

4 REPRESENTATIVE DELOZIER: Is it
5 competitive, or how is it done?

6 SECRETARY RIVERA: Absolutely. It was
7 competitive. It was a grant, and the schools had to
8 submit the grant to the Department of Education
9 explicitly explaining how they were going to utilize
10 those dollars.

11 You know, engaging in changing reporting
12 methods and systems, you know, developing the
13 adults, the staff on campus, providing safe spaces
14 for reporting and the like. So they had to share,
15 specifically, how they were going to allocate the
16 funds locally.

17 REPRESENTATIVE DELOZIER: Okay. And to
18 those issues that you just mentioned, as it says,
19 about one and a half -- 63 schools received about a
20 million and a half. So it's about \$23,000 per
21 school, give or take, if I did the math correctly,
22 but you mentioned staff and you mentioned data.

23 Two questions there. The data, who has
24 the data?

25 And what data do we have?

1 Because I haven't seen anything on the
2 website that stated what had been gathered by these
3 63 schools.

4 SECRETARY RIVERA: Yes. So we collect
5 the data. And the 63 are the number of applications
6 we've currently received, correct? Yep.

7 In early March, but we do collect the
8 data, you know, as it relates to their deliverables
9 as part of the grant, so we could share that.

10 REPRESENTATIVE DELOZIER: Okay. So the
11 63 were applications.

12 How many actually got the funds, then?

13 SECRETARY RIVERA: I'll pull my
14 colleague's binder here.

15 Absolutely.

16 In 2016-'17, we awarded 36 grants to
17 post-secondary institutions. And I shared with you
18 that number, 87,000 students impacted and 16,000
19 professionals were impacted specifically by those
20 grants.

21 REPRESENTATIVE DELOZIER: Okay. So 63
22 schools in the State of Pennsylvania received
23 dollars.

24 And in '17-'18, how many schools
25 received?

1 SECRETARY RIVERA: In '16-'17, 36 grants.

2 REPRESENTATIVE DELOZIER: Right.

3 And in '17-'18?

4 SECRETARY RIVERA: In '17-'18, those are
5 the current grant applications?

6 Is that the current?

7 Sixty-three applications. So we have 63
8 applications.

9 REPRESENTATIVE DELOZIER: For this coming
10 -- so when will those be awarded?

11 What's the time frame?

12 SECRETARY RIVERA: Early March.

13 REPRESENTATIVE DELOZIER: Okay.

14 SECRETARY RIVERA: Now. So the team is
15 working on it now.

16 REPRESENTATIVE DELOZIER: All right.
17 Great.

18 And then those statistics in and of
19 themselves, you said you could get those to us as to
20 what had been gathered by the folks that received --

21 SECRETARY RIVERA: What had been reported
22 accordingly, sure.

23 REPRESENTATIVE DELOZIER: Okay.

24 And my last question is the fact that
25 when I talked to PASSHE on their sheet that they had

1 in their budget update and everything, it mentioned
2 -- and I mentioned it to them -- that three years
3 running it said we would be working to hire folks on
4 campus to deal with this issue.

5 And from their point of view and what
6 they testified to was that had yet to be done. My
7 question to them was, why was it taking three years
8 when each year they had asked for increases in staff
9 allotments, but none of those staff allotments went
10 to that issue?

11 And they said it wasn't the -- their
12 response was that they have to prioritize and that
13 wasn't the priority.

14 So I guess my issue and question is, are
15 we hiring or planning on hiring?

16 Because in three years, we haven't done
17 so for staff dedicated to this issue.

18 SECRETARY RIVERA: I can't speak,
19 specifically, to the decisions PASSHE schools are
20 making in relation to hiring personnel, but I can
21 tell you, along with you in the General Assembly,
22 the Governor and we at the Department, I mean, we've
23 made this a focus. We've, you know, we've upped the
24 narrative.

25 We set high expectation. We made grant

1 opportunities available for all schools.

2 REPRESENTATIVE DELOZIER: Right. And
3 those trainings and everything you mentioned,
4 absolutely.

5 SECRETARY RIVERA: So we'll keep --

6 REPRESENTATIVE DELOZIER: But if we don't
7 have staff there, if they're taking the slots and
8 giving them to other priorities, the message isn't
9 connecting, I guess, is my point.

10 SECRETARY RIVERA: Yeah. We're going to
11 keep pounding the drum and --

12 REPRESENTATIVE DELOZIER: Okay.

13 SECRETARY RIVERA: Yeah.

14 REPRESENTATIVE DELOZIER: Thank you very
15 much.

16 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: Representative
17 Donatucci.

18 REPRESENTATIVE DONATUCCI: Thank you.
19 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

20 Good morning, Mr. Secretary.

21 An important theme from previous hearings
22 is the need to break down the silos between agencies
23 to ensure that our citizens are getting full
24 cooperation across the government.

25 Can you talk about what changes PDE has

1 made to promote interagency cooperation, including
2 it being relative to the PA Smart?

3 And can you give some examples?

4 SECRETARY RIVERA: Absolutely.

5 You know, I think over the course of the
6 past three years, we've been very fortunate in the
7 Department of Education to solicit many other
8 agencies in support of our mission, everything from
9 safety/security to academic attainment to advocacy.

10 And you know, as I can share with you
11 with some, you know, specificity as it aligns to PA
12 Smart and beyond, you know, working with
13 Labor & Industry in the creation of the Teacher in
14 the Workplace Program. So you know, for example, I
15 know we've been -- I've had an opportunity to see
16 some smaller versions of this that we hope to scale
17 up, but teachers over the summer, and educators over
18 the summer, participating with businesses and
19 industries to better understand what is needed from
20 our, you know, future and current graduates to be
21 successful in the workplace.

22 You know, I got to see a great video
23 where some educators spent two weeks with high
24 industries, for example, over the summer. And they
25 walked away better understanding that it's not just

1 about construction jobs. There are multi -- there
2 are many other, you know, multifaceted skill sets
3 needed as part of that industry.

4 So one of our partnerships with
5 Labor & Industry is getting more teachers in the
6 workplace to better understand how to, you know,
7 support and educate students to be successful in the
8 workplace. Through our partnership with the
9 Workforce Investment Board, understanding that there
10 are greater opportunities for our students to
11 participate themselves in internships and with
12 partners.

13 You know, we visited schools where they
14 are pushing and getting more kids in the industries
15 to expose themselves to careers early on and that's
16 a result of partnerships. The work that we're doing
17 with the Department of Corrections around early
18 literacy -- I mean, putting books in prisons so that
19 families can read, you know, with their young
20 children, you know, to really push literacy even in
21 our correctional institutions has been impactful.

22 So we're lucky in the Department of Ed
23 that many agencies have kind of taken the call to
24 support education and step up and support us.

25 REPRESENTATIVE DONATUCCI: Thank you.

1 Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have no more
2 questions.

3 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: Thank you.

4 I wanted to recognize Representative
5 Tobash, who also is not a member of the
6 Appropriations Committee, who has joined us, as
7 well.

8 We will move to the next questioner,
9 which is Representative Grove.

10 REPRESENTATIVE GROVE: Thank you,
11 Mr. Chairman.

12 Good morning. How are you?

13 SECRETARY RIVERA: Good morning.

14 Good morning, Representative.

15 REPRESENTATIVE GROVE: Good.

16 I want to follow up. Someone asked about
17 PA Smart Initiative.

18 Did I hear you correctly that part of
19 that is asking what business and industry need and
20 want as far as jobs?

21 SECRETARY RIVERA: Part of that is
22 working with Labor & Industry to align the
23 continuous work that we're doing to the needs of
24 business and industry, yes.

25 REPRESENTATIVE GROVE: Okay. Is

1 administration supporting the elimination of
2 Workforce Investment Boards with that?

3 SECRETARY RIVERA: It's not my area, but
4 I've not heard that.

5 REPRESENTATIVE GROVE: Okay. Because
6 that's generally what WIBs are supposed to do. So
7 I'm curious if we're going to fund both
8 simultaneously to do the same work or is PA Smart
9 different from what WIBs do?

10 SECRETARY RIVERA: Yeah. PA Smart is not
11 an agency or not a collective group. It's an
12 initiative to leverage existing opportunities to,
13 you know, meet those demands. So I'm sure, through
14 the Governor's PA Smart Initiative -- well, not that
15 I'm sure -- I know that through the Governor's
16 PA Smart Initiative, the WIBs are going to play a
17 significant role.

18 REPRESENTATIVE GROVE: Okay. Because it
19 sounds like exactly what WIBs are supposed to be
20 doing. I just don't want the same money doing the
21 exact same thing --

22 SECRETARY RIVERA: Understood.

23 REPRESENTATIVE GROVE: -- within a budget
24 process.

25 So within the PA Smart, what type of

1 organizations are providers that are anticipated to
2 provide the activities of the PA Smart?

3 Do you have an idea of who is going to be
4 implementing that?

5 SECRETARY RIVERA: So I don't think we're
6 yet at a point, you know, to engage with that deep
7 of specificity. What I can share with you, as the
8 Governor is proposing it, you know, at the higher
9 level, it's the Department of Education, Labor &
10 Industry, DCED and other agencies coming together to
11 really first realize some of the recommendations
12 that have come through the Middle Class Task Force
13 and then pulling those agencies together to make
14 those decisions moving forward.

15 REPRESENTATIVE GROVE: All right. So who
16 is on the Middle Class Task Force?

17 SECRETARY RIVERA: So the Middle Class
18 Task Force was chaired by, you know, the president,
19 the head of the AFL-CIO, the State Chamber,
20 Workforce Investment Board and higher education
21 representatives.

22 REPRESENTATIVE GROVE: Okay. So the WIBs
23 were on that.

24 SECRETARY RIVERA: The WIBs were on that,
25 yes.

1 REPRESENTATIVE GROVE: Was this a
2 recommendation of that?

3 SECRETARY RIVERA: It was a -- it was
4 aligning the recommendations of that, yes.

5 REPRESENTATIVE GROVE: All right. Were
6 those recommendations made public at any point?

7 SECRETARY RIVERA: Uh-huh.

8 REPRESENTATIVE GROVE: Okay.

9 SECRETARY RIVERA: So all of the meetings
10 were open public meetings and the information shared
11 at those meetings was public.

12 REPRESENTATIVE GROVE: All right. Can
13 you send those recommendations over?

14 SECRETARY RIVERA: Absolutely.

15 REPRESENTATIVE GROVE: I appreciate that.

16 SECRETARY RIVERA: Absolutely.

17 REPRESENTATIVE GROVE: So obviously, one
18 of the Governor's big pushes is career and technical
19 education. He's talked about it a lot in his
20 budget.

21 My big question is, why is PASSHE getting
22 a significant increase when it's really our
23 community colleges as far as higher ed doing a bulk
24 of the career and tech STEM education?

25 So just curious how that decision was

1 being made, that our big push is STEM education,
2 career/tech and kind of community colleges were left
3 out?

4 SECRETARY RIVERA: You know, again, we
5 understood limited resources and had to make some
6 recommendations. However, I will share, again,
7 that, you know, the request for flat funding is not
8 an indictment on any one program over another.

9 What I can share with you, and I won't
10 take too much time in redundancies, but we are
11 working in the Department of Education to continue
12 to leverage other opportunities for community
13 colleges, state-related colleges, technical colleges
14 to align what's happening in the higher ed space to
15 the K-12 space to build capacity, to garnish, you
16 know, additional revenue and to really support their
17 programs.

18 REPRESENTATIVE GROVE: Okay. Is any of
19 that PA Smart money going to be available for
20 community colleges?

21 SECRETARY RIVERA: You know, I would
22 assume so. I don't have the specifics, but the
23 mission of PA Smart directly and clearly aligns to
24 technical colleges, career technical programs and
25 community colleges.

1 REPRESENTATIVE GROVE: Are you going to
2 be asking for policy language for PA Smart?

3 SECRETARY RIVERA: You know, right now
4 we're looking at it as an initiative, you know, as a
5 collaboration between agencies. But as many of our
6 initiatives that have gained speed and really
7 worked, you know, sometimes the administration, in
8 general, somebody wants to codify it in the law.

9 You know, I think if we get to a point
10 where that's appropriate, I'll make myself available
11 to inform accordingly.

12 REPRESENTATIVE GROVE: Okay. Because I
13 only worry a little bit. I mean, we had discussion
14 on the Labor & Industry Committee about the
15 apprenticeship program newly started. Money was
16 taken from, I believe, the Small Business First
17 Fund.

18 I always worry about where appropriations
19 go, what they're a guise for.

20 SECRETARY RIVERA: Understood.

21 REPRESENTATIVE GROVE: I mean,
22 Labor & Industry basically said, well, we thought we
23 could do it without any real -- I mean, their
24 attorneys, still to date, haven't provided any
25 initiative on how they can utilize that

1 appropriation to create and start a new program
2 moving forward.

3 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

4 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: Representative
5 Boback.

6 REPRESENTATIVE BOBACK: Thank you,
7 Mr. Chairman.

8 Good morning, Secretary Rivera.

9 I serve on the Republican Subcommittee of
10 Education here in Appropriations. Our whole goal of
11 this Committee is to analyze funding with, of
12 course, not negatively impacting excellent
13 curricula. So I'm going to share some ideas that
14 have come out of our discussion thus far.

15 First of all, I like that 15 credits per
16 semester, because what we've been trying to deal
17 with, those students who have to stay in
18 college/university five or six years with their
19 complaint that the course is not offered.

20 So with the course not being offered, of
21 course, when I'm confronted with that, well, gee,
22 with online education, can you take a course online?

23 Well, I work to support myself to go to
24 school, so I can't take a night course. I can't go
25 to another college. So I get that.

1 So through our discussion, our thought
2 was, perhaps with the State System universities,
3 maybe they need to consider going back to where it
4 was when I went to school. I mean, there were
5 certain colleges, universities that offered
6 curriculum for teacher education, then for business
7 education and so on and so forth, so that you're
8 almost guaranteed in that realm that you will finish
9 within four years.

10 So we're looking at that, particularly if
11 some universities don't have the staff or claim they
12 don't have enough demand for a certain course, to
13 hire another instructor. So that's one idea.

14 The second is, graduate placement. When
15 I took my own son looking for different colleges and
16 universities, we were certainly really excited with
17 certain universities that would say, we guarantee
18 that your son, upon graduation, has a 93, 95, 97
19 percent chance of being hired, because that's what
20 they do with their students.

21 They actually take them and nurture them
22 and make sure they're on task throughout. So if
23 they great, chances are, they're going to get some
24 type of a great job. And they were good paying
25 jobs. They were great paying jobs.

1 So my question then is, from our staff
2 and our team, performance-based, do we analyze what
3 goes on in colleges and universities?

4 You mentioned it; you alluded to it
5 before.

6 I mean, do you require these
7 universities -- upon graduation, who gets hired?

8 And at what cost can you require them to
9 do that, because that would give everybody an
10 advantage point to what's being produced by our
11 state universities?

12 SECRETARY RIVERA: So there is an
13 expectation that universities align their course
14 work to the needs of business and industry and
15 evolve accordingly; I'll be honest with you.

16 Actually, the law works against us in
17 collecting information that would allow us to build
18 accountability systems around, you know, college
19 attainment and workforce attainment, which is why,
20 as I shared earlier, we're trying to find other ways
21 to track that information through other agencies,
22 you know, in the Commonwealth, but even then we run
23 into barriers of FERPA, barriers of privacy.

24 So we're always careful when we
25 discuss -- we want to collect people's data. So

1 we're trying to find a way to do so in a way that's
2 respectful, you know, of our constituents and the
3 greater community, but I was surprised when I first
4 started because I wanted -- I thought we would be
5 able to better create an early childhood through
6 workforce, you know, continuum in terms of, you
7 know, how our students are doing, our learners are
8 doing. And I learned that I can't do it because of
9 the law.

10 REPRESENTATIVE BOBACK: Well, if I could
11 help you with any of that, I will, because I do
12 respect privacy. But there's got to be a way, if
13 private institutions can track, there's got to be a
14 way that public institutions can track where their
15 students are going, at least in general terms.

16 That would be a goal, I would feel.

17 SECRETARY RIVERA: And if I could share
18 with you quickly, in response to -- they pulled the
19 data up quickly for Representative Kim and it aligns
20 exactly with what you just asked, only 50 percent of
21 our college-goers complete a degree within six
22 years.

23 That was the information that they just
24 tracked down for us through the clearinghouse.

25 REPRESENTATIVE BOBACK: Fifty percent,

1 did you say, graduate?

2 SECRETARY RIVERA: Fifty percent in six
3 years.

4 REPRESENTATIVE BOBACK: Okay. And as a
5 comment, I started in public education 45 years ago.
6 Forty-three years ago, I was a career advisor. And
7 it sounds exactly like what we're trying to do.

8 It seems what we keep on doing is going
9 around, going around, this same thing. Career
10 advisor in a medical school to make sure students,
11 early on, get some kind of an idea. We got a grant.
12 We had computers.

13 They were able to -- very old-fashioned
14 computers, albeit. They were modern at that time,
15 but they were able to look and see what kind of jobs
16 might be available at an early age, and then it
17 stopped. So my suggestion is, not only for our
18 State, but nationally, we really have to check
19 statistically so that we don't keep on reinventing
20 the wheel at what cost.

21 These are taxpayer dollars. All I can
22 say is, here we go again. I think we have to keep
23 better track, statistic analyses of what we're
24 doing, what works, what doesn't work and move on
25 from there. Because 43 years ago here, as I said,

1 it's kind of bizarre.

2 But I thank you for your attention. I
3 will be glad to work with you on collecting data, if
4 you like. Thanks for your participation.

5 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

6 SECRETARY RIVERA: Thank you.

7 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: We have been
8 joined by Representative Eric Nelson, as well, who
9 is not a member of the Committee, but is here to
10 observe.

11 We will move to our next questioner, who
12 is Representative Doyle Heffley.

13 MR. HEFFLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

14 And thank you, Secretary. Over here.

15 Just to follow up, earlier you had said
16 about incentivizing dual enrollment.

17 Where in the budget is there any funding
18 associated with incentivizing dual enrollment?

19 SECRETARY RIVERA: I didn't say
20 financially incentivizing dual enrollment. Dual
21 enrollment is one of -- so we've broken down
22 Future Ready PA into, you know, three criteria, one
23 achievement, which we'll discuss later, I'm sure.
24 The second are on-track measures. But the third set
25 of criteria are College and Career Readiness

1 Standards.

2 And through our College and Career
3 Readiness Standards, as part of the school's forward
4 facing accountability tool, dual enrollment is one
5 of the options that schools can engage in, career
6 and technical education being another, high quality
7 advanced placement. International baccalaureate
8 course is another program that schools will be
9 recognized for offering.

10 So incentivized through our system of
11 accountability and reporting, we've not asked for --

12 REPRESENTATIVE HEFFLEY: Not financially?

13 SECRETARY RIVERA: Financially, no.

14 REPRESENTATIVE HEFFLEY: Community
15 colleges are one of the largest providers for dual
16 enrollment.

17 Also, between the community colleges and
18 many of your state and other universities, my
19 daughter is going through this program, but the
20 courses are the same. And I guess, the overall --
21 is there a vision going forward, not just dollars
22 because everyone is always asking for more dollars,
23 but is there a vision going forward?

24 I mean, you've seen this in every
25 industry across the globe, but we still have the

1 same model for higher education. Now with Internet,
2 online learning, dual enrollment opportunities, you
3 know, we look at the opportunities for technical
4 training in schools that we're not filling that
5 need.

6 You know, what is the vision as far as in
7 10 years?

8 I mean, so much of the student debt
9 occurs when a student lives on campus and finances
10 the lodging and their meals and everything else.

11 Is there a focus to shift away from that
12 model, using the Internet and other opportunities,
13 to bring down that cost?

14 Because right now, I think student debt
15 is higher than credit card debt in the nation. I
16 don't know exactly where that number is, but it
17 seems like we're getting a whole lot of debt
18 incurred.

19 Is there a model to focus and streamline
20 education?

21 Because education is going to be, you
22 know, going forward, it's going to evolve, every two
23 -- every four years. The job you have now, in four
24 years, may be obsolete with technology.

25 Is there a focus in higher ed, rather

1 than just saying, we're going to put more of our
2 money here or there in contracts, as to what is the
3 vision with higher ed going forward?

4 SECRETARY RIVERA: So not a focus to
5 phase out, per se. However, there is a focus, you
6 know, towards creating more personalized options, so
7 more hybrids.

8 You know, understand that one of the
9 reasons we're looking to incentivize early college
10 and career access is because we understand that,
11 first, it helps mitigate cost. I mean, if you can
12 take as many credits as you can, which I'm sure you
13 know with your daughter, if you can take as many
14 credits as you can in high school, it's then
15 bringing down costs when you go to a college or
16 university.

17 And whether that's dual enrollment, you
18 know, credit-aligned, articulated courses, you know,
19 at the college, university and career and technical
20 education, it's CTE programs that are aligned to
21 industry certificates and degrees. So first, we're
22 incentivizing those, you know, options to bring down
23 costs, but also to increase exposure.

24 There are still so many students that go
25 on to higher ed institutions and don't know what's

1 going to be expected of them and then that helps
2 increase costs.

3 REPRESENTATIVE HEFFLEY: Is that in any
4 way a requirement?

5 I know one of the opportunities we found
6 working through the community college with dual
7 enrollment and then learning about other dual
8 enrollment colleges, does that need to be through
9 the guidance counselors in your K-12 or is it
10 something that, you know, the different
11 representatives from the colleges and universities
12 should be explaining up front?

13 Are they required to explain that up
14 front as students look to come to those
15 institutions?

16 SECRETARY RIVERA: They're currently not
17 required. It is a best practice. So, you know,
18 it's interesting, in PA, we are an extremely proud
19 local control State.

20 So you know, we try, through the
21 Department, to create best practice, incentivize and
22 then use our bully pulpit to, you know, encourage
23 more folks to align to that best practice. Now,
24 what we will do -- and through Future Ready PA, and
25 I'm sure you'll hear more about this later --

1 through Act 339 -- there's a 339 college and career
2 readiness plan -- all schools are expected to
3 complete.

4 We've never really monitored, you know,
5 those plans. We've kind of asked if they were in
6 place and we said, great job. Now, we're actually
7 throwing some weight and expectation behind the
8 339 plan and that is where schools articulate, you
9 know that alignment between middle, you know,
10 elementary, -because we're including elementary, --
11 middle, middle to high to higher ed options.

12 So you will start to see, not mandate,
13 but you will start to see an expectation that they
14 align those opportunities for kids.

15 REPRESENTATIVE HEFFLEY: And is there a
16 cost analysis, I mean, how much a student can save
17 -- and you can get back to me later because I see
18 I've got the red light -- by going to this route
19 through the community college, dual enrollment
20 versus going to a four-year institution, like a
21 savings per student?

22 Do you have those numbers?

23 SECRETARY RIVERA: It's anecdotal. You
24 know, it's hard to pull the numbers because you may
25 take, you know, Lit 1, Lit 2, but then change

1 majors. Or it may not be aligned to a major, so in
2 terms of a gen ed.

3 So I'd be worried to try to --

4 REPRESENTATIVE HEFFLEY: Just like an
5 average, if we could maybe --

6 SECRETARY RIVERA: Maybe I could pull you
7 an average if you take -- students can earn up to
8 three or four credits, you know, at a college and
9 through a traditional dual enrollment opportunity,
10 maybe how much it could save, but I don't want to
11 give you a qualified statement. I'd probably be
12 wrong somewhere.

13 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: Okay.
14 Representative Briggs.

15 REPRESENTATIVE BRIGGS: Thank you,
16 Mr. Chairman.

17 And thank you, Secretary. I have a
18 little bit of a question about higher education.
19 Unfortunately, no one from the state-relateds or
20 PASSHE is joining you, but I think you can probably
21 handle this.

22 I am uniquely situated as I may be the
23 only legislator who attended a community college, a
24 PASSHE school and a State-related. I tried to get
25 my daughter, who is a senior in high school, to

1 visit all of those schools.

2 It's unfortunate when, really, the bottom
3 line of her decision was cost. And she's attending
4 one of the most competitive private schools in the
5 State. It's coming in cheaper than any, you know,
6 at least the PASSHE and state relateds.

7 Could you talk a little bit about, you
8 know, the cost of tuition and any sort of master
9 plan when it comes to higher education that the
10 State should be kind of directing, especially with
11 those three, community college, PASSHE and state
12 relateds?

13 SECRETARY RIVERA: Yeah.

14 REPRESENTATIVE BRIGGS: So what's been
15 done in the past and what you think could be done in
16 the future.

17 SECRETARY RIVERA: First, Representative,
18 I share that distinction with you; community
19 college, state related and State System school.

20 You know, I will share with you, in terms
21 of mitigating costs, you know, we've been working
22 really hard towards alignment in what we can
23 control, you know, providing more opportunities,
24 creating better alignment, working on preparedness
25 so kids aren't wasting time while going through, you

1 know, the higher ed institutions, providing summer
2 and long-term enrichment, you know, potentially
3 looking at long-term grants and opportunities to
4 reengage students.

5 So we're working extremely hard within
6 what we can control to try to bring down costs for
7 the individual. You know, as I've been looking more
8 closely, you know, as Secretary, at the cost of
9 higher ed and agreeing with and seeing firsthand how
10 costs have increased, there are many factors over
11 the course of the past decade that have led to those
12 costs.

13 You know, I understand that this is one
14 of those areas that we have to work very closely
15 with you, you know, and the administration to
16 inform. So I'm the guy kind of closest to the user,
17 both at the university level and to the families on
18 this.

19 I bring back, and I share both with the
20 members of our Committee and the General Assembly
21 and the administration, the anecdotal feedback that
22 we're receiving from parents across the
23 Commonwealth. And it is something, college
24 affordability is something that we have to continue
25 to work towards and address and, you know, is on the

1 forefront of anyone who has a child either in or
2 anywhere near school age, you know, for the future.

3 So I don't -- we don't have a master plan
4 to decrease costs as it's associated with tuition
5 and the like without discussing the investments we
6 make into higher ed, because then that will then
7 shift the burden to the State from the family, you
8 know, going to college, but there are concerns with
9 that, as well. But I do think there are continued
10 opportunities for us to have conversations around,
11 you know, how do we invest and what should we invest
12 in higher ed?

13 How should we think outside the box, you
14 know, with providing hybrid models and supporting
15 them to improve the infrastructure?

16 And then, lastly, how can we continue to
17 do and engage in some of the programs that we like
18 to see in the Department of Ed to allow students to
19 take more credits before they go on to college,
20 better prepare themselves and graduate on time?

21 You know, that's something that we've
22 been focusing on.

23 REPRESENTATIVE BRIGGS: I guess I should
24 have put this in my question. We also visit a
25 number of neighboring states, public schools. And

1 it really -- I know it was the 2009-2011 budgets
2 that we started, really, underfunding education.
3 And until we start addressing our commitment to the
4 public institutions, I think that is, you know, I
5 think our citizens are going to have to be paying
6 higher tuitions and setting a generation up for just
7 massive debt.

8 I like your -- you're trying to be
9 sensitive, and you can answer what you feel
10 comfortable with, but I think until we take a more
11 serious job of funding it appropriately, and then
12 also trying to comprehensively look at all of our
13 institutions to try to best keep costs down.

14 I mean, it's a big challenge. I thank
15 you for participating and being as accessible as you
16 are. I know we've talked a number of times about
17 these issues and others.

18 So thank you, Chairman. Looking forward
19 to this afternoon's conversation, as well.

20 SECRETARY RIVERA: Thank you.

21 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: Representative
22 Quinn.

23 REPRESENTATIVE QUINN: Thank you,
24 Mr. Chairman.

25 Mr. Secretary and others --

1 SECRETARY RIVERA: Good morning.

2 REPRESENTATIVE QUINN: -- thanks for
3 being here.

4 Last week, I was asking a couple of
5 questions about the Employee Liability
6 Self-Insurance Program. I would like to continue
7 along that line.

8 We all learned last week that this
9 program, which is run under DGS, is like an umbrella
10 program for all State Agencies, including the PASSHE
11 System is part of that, correct?

12 SECRETARY RIVERA: I don't want to -- I
13 believe so, but I'm not familiar with that --

14 REPRESENTATIVE QUINN: Okay. I'm going
15 to keep going.

16 So what I learned last week was that on
17 an annual basis, \$5.57 million is paid. And that's
18 an assessment that's on all of -- that agencies pay
19 based on the number of employees. And last year,
20 about \$3 million in claims was paid out.

21 Those claims could vary from anything,
22 you know, a slip and fall to yellow lines getting on
23 the car, anything like that. But we've had some
24 things brought to light about behavior where there
25 have been some payouts in different branches of

1 government. I'm curious about what type of payouts
2 have there been, if any, in the higher education
3 system?

4 The reason I'm bringing this up is, you
5 know, we're not too far removed from headlines of
6 payouts over a hundred million dollars from one of
7 the state-relateds. And I get very concerned that
8 if those payouts were to escalate, given the level
9 of awareness about these problems right now, that
10 the taxpayers of Pennsylvania, and the System, the
11 General Fund, whomever, are all going to be on the
12 hook.

13 So to my question, what payouts have
14 there been that have been under the nature of
15 employee poor behavior, to put it mildly, as opposed
16 to, you know, a slip and fall?

17 SECRETARY RIVERA: Yeah. So I have to be
18 honest with you, it's not a direct conversation that
19 I have been involved in, you know, with the
20 administration nor the higher ed institution. Quite
21 frankly, you know, having lived within that space of
22 self-insured, you know, as a district administrator,
23 I also know there's some legality around what you
24 can and can't respond to.

25 I don't know the nuances of that in terms

1 of government, so I'm going to ask if you'll allow
2 me to go back into --

3 REPRESENTATIVE QUINN: I'm not asking
4 about individuals. I'm asking about a dollar
5 amount.

6 SECRETARY RIVERA: Yeah.

7 REPRESENTATIVE QUINN: Because my
8 concern, and I brought it up the other day, is what
9 systems do we, as a State, have in place for a
10 reinsurance should an annual \$5.75 million not
11 cover, as we've seen in other states?

12 SECRETARY RIVERA: It's a great question.
13 You know, I would ask that you allow us
14 to go back and do our due diligence around this.

15 REPRESENTATIVE QUINN: I will. You know,
16 I don't want to put in a Right-to-Know request for
17 these, but the other thing is, I'd like to know when
18 you get back to me, with regard to your collective
19 bargaining agreements, should there be a payout on
20 behalf of an employee?

21 Is that addressed in the collective
22 bargaining agreement; and if not, when can it next
23 be addressed in it?

24 Can you go back and put an addendum on
25 it?

1 Because again, we've had these
2 conversations here. This is not something that some
3 inappropriate, possibly some criminal behavior,
4 should be swept under the carpet, paid for by
5 taxpayers, and the perpetrator just stays on payroll
6 happily ever after.

7 SECRETARY RIVERA: Understood. We'll
8 pull all of that together for you.

9 REPRESENTATIVE QUINN: Thank you.
10 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

11 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: I want to
12 recognize Representative Frankel, who has joined us
13 as well, in observance today.

14 Representative Markosek, any closing
15 comment?

16 MINORITY CHAIRMAN MARKOSEK: Thank you,
17 Chairman. I don't have -- I'll have some questions
18 this afternoon on basic ed, but I want to thank you
19 for your testimony.

20 Thank you.

21 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: To follow up
22 all of the questions that have been asked today, I
23 think that people have talked about student debt.
24 I'm a proud student who went to IUP. Very proud of
25 York College, which is a private institution in

1 York.

2 But I do think that until this
3 legislature and our Governor get our contracts for
4 our college professors under control -- when college
5 professors in our State System work basically 12
6 hours a week, compared to other professors, and have
7 benefits where the college students that are going
8 to our PASSHE System and are paying for the students
9 of those college professors to get a college
10 education, when they're having a tough enough time,
11 and when our families, who are sending their kids to
12 our State System are working 55, 60 hours a week and
13 our college professors are working 12 hours a week,
14 we're going to continue to see student debt rise.

15 We have to face the facts. Cutting costs
16 means being fair. You know, there are a lot of
17 issues about pay fairness. It goes for our college
18 professors, as well. Private colleges and
19 universities can offer a far better education
20 sometimes at a cheaper rate than our State System
21 because our contracts have gotten out of control.

22 Mr. Secretary, unless we get that under
23 control, no matter how much rhetoric and press
24 conferences we have about the debt of students, it's
25 going to continue to rise, simply because we keep

1 giving away more and more benefits. It can't
2 continue.

3 Just as we are changing the legislation
4 around the Capitol here with changes and reforms and
5 transparency, that same transparency has to happen
6 in our public schools. And I'm talking about
7 PASSHE. There are a lot of problems there.

8 And I don't believe the courage -- as I
9 told the Chancellor -- I don't believe there's
10 enough courage in the Board of Trustees to make
11 those changes. And that means, in the end, I think
12 we're going to have to squeeze them financially to
13 force them to make those changes.

14 It's not what I want to do, but I'll tell
15 you what, we have heard about complaints in our
16 State System for long enough, for years now, long
17 before I was Chairman of this Committee, and nothing
18 has changed. Until those changes take place, our
19 students and our parents, who are taxpayers of this
20 Commonwealth, are going to continue to see that debt
21 rise.

22 As they're raising families, they're
23 going to continue -- their kids are going to be
24 graduating from college before they even pay off
25 their debt and college education. So,

1 Mr. Secretary, I ask you this afternoon to bring
2 with you the last three years' worth of costs of the
3 current contract, what it is in the current fiscal
4 year, this current fiscal year that we're going to
5 be doing a budget for, and the following year, as to
6 exact cost increase to the students of Pennsylvania
7 and the parents for that contract.

8 It will be the first question I ask you
9 when we start the afternoon session, so that the
10 parents and public can see what those contracts are
11 costing us as such. I also think that we need to
12 start benefiting our community colleges. They are
13 doing an amazing job in educating our children and
14 preparing them for the workforce.

15 Our higher ed institutions are doing a
16 great job, as well, as far as the four-year
17 colleges, our private, the state-related. We need
18 to get PASSHE on board to do as good as our
19 community colleges. I think we need to take a
20 serious look at how much money we're appropriating
21 for community colleges.

22 I'm a believer in rewarding those who are
23 successful, those who are solving problems. And our
24 community colleges have been doing exactly that
25 along with our trade schools like Thaddeus Stevens

1 and others. So I think we at the State level have
2 to get back to performance, rewarding people who
3 perform, and then recognizing those who are failing
4 the taxpayers of Pennsylvania and their students.

5 So with that, I will adjourn this hearing
6 until 1 o'clock this afternoon. We'll see you at
7 1 o'clock, Mr. Secretary.

8 SECRETARY RIVERA: Thank you, sir.

9 (Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

10 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: We'll call the
11 afternoon hearing to order.

12 I had stated at the adjournment of the
13 10 o'clock hearing that we would start off with
14 answers to the increase in APSCUF's contract over
15 the current fiscal year and the next two years.
16 I've given the Secretary until the end of today to
17 -- until the end of this hearing to come up with
18 that.

19 The Budget Secretary -- we were in
20 conversation with the Budget Secretary, as well. So
21 we'll have that, hopefully, before the end of this,
22 or the Secretary will be here tomorrow morning.

23 SECRETARY RIVERA: We're working to have
24 the information to the General Assembly before we
25 leave today.

1 We did pull a second data set that was
2 requested in relation to SARA. So 93 institutions
3 signed up. Forty-eight percent of all eligible
4 institutions, 61 percent of colleges and
5 universities; so we're about 61 percent colleges and
6 universities; 48 percent of all.

7 That includes private licensed
8 institutions. Collected around \$1.5 million in fees
9 through that partnership to -- and that's the
10 personnel that manages the SARA agreement.

11 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: Okay. We will
12 now move to pre-K-12th grade education. The
13 questions will stay focused on that.

14 I will let Representative Markosek, who
15 had some comments or questions, start off.

16 MINORITY CHAIRMAN MARKOSEK: Yes. Thank
17 you, Chairman.

18 So it seems to me right now, throughout
19 the nation, as well as Pennsylvania and certainly my
20 district, the three biggest issues facing public
21 education right now, and education in general, which
22 would include the private schools, as well, is
23 safety in the schools, safety in the schools and
24 safety in the schools. I think by far and away,
25 based on what's happened nationally and in the

1 media, et cetera, I think those are -- that is the
2 biggest issue right now facing us.

3 There are plenty of others. I don't mean
4 to minimize the others. I know we have a safe
5 school line item, and I know that the funding for
6 that was, I think, about \$7 million last year. And
7 I think this year we're looking at somewhere around
8 \$8 million, if I'm not mistaken.

9 Just since -- and I think some of those
10 numbers were put together, you know, before some of
11 the more recent issues and recent tragedies that
12 have made the news have occurred. Since that time,
13 it just seems like there's been a whole new effort.
14 And I'm sure within your Department, the same is
15 true.

16 Can you tell us a little bit more?

17 Can you give us a status report on not
18 only what has been recommended, but where we should
19 be going as we move forward here?

20 I know we're not going to come to any
21 great agreements here today because there are a lot
22 of different things that are going to go into making
23 our schools safer, but can you just tell us, from
24 your level, from the Department's level, the highest
25 elevation of the Department, where we are in making

1 our schools safer in Pennsylvania?

2 SECRETARY RIVERA: Thank you for the
3 question. We also agree that safety and security is
4 an issue that, of course, we're discussing now as of
5 lately as a result of horrible, you know, threats
6 and horrible incidents that have occurred at schools
7 across the United States.

8 It's a continuous conversation that
9 happens, that exists with us within the education
10 community and not only statewide, nationally. I've
11 had an opportunity to connect with my colleague in
12 Kentucky and colleagues in Florida, and just, of
13 course, to share any support we can offer, but also
14 to hear their perspective as leaders, you know, in
15 addressing this issue.

16 We've met, of course, with members of the
17 General Assembly and internally. And I think, you
18 know, in limited time, I want to focus on what I do
19 believe we can control. Staying out of the real
20 critical narrative that takes place, but I
21 understand that, you know, as leaders, supporting
22 the system of education, we can look at school
23 safety in three ways.

24 One, you know, what can be done before to
25 mitigate threats and to mitigate violence. We have

1 to think about what happens in response, during an
2 act of violence and the need of safety. But what
3 I've also been learning through my colleagues, what
4 we don't spend a lot of time discussing, and is
5 equally as important, is what we do after an
6 incident of violence occurs and we're addressing our
7 kids and communities.

8 So first, before; the Department engages
9 in some aspects of school safety, hopefully to
10 mitigate violence, to mitigate casualties. We
11 provide a school climate survey to schools across
12 the Commonwealth, which they can participate in. A
13 good number of the schools do participate.

14 We created and communicated out a tool
15 kit that exists by PEMA, our partners at PEMA, the
16 hazardous tool kit that puts in place look-fors and
17 areas that can be engaged to ensure safety. We have
18 a school safety tool kit that schools can engage in.

19 We provide grants to schools to employ,
20 to hire and employ, SRO, SPOs, school safety
21 officers, school safety equipment grants, as well as
22 program and professional development grants. So
23 schoolwide, positive behavioral support,
24 counseling-type grants, so we do make that
25 available. It's something that we always encourage

1 more schools to participate in. You know, if
2 there's an area to discuss increases, that's
3 definitely one of the areas we can look to increase
4 support for.

5 We also provide -- you know, it's
6 interesting, when you think of the profiling, even
7 this morning on the news, the profile again of what
8 we're discussing, anti-bullying initiative, you
9 know, putting supports in place to meet the social,
10 emotional, mental health needs of students in place,
11 developing relationships with parents to monitor
12 social media.

13 So I can go on and on, but I do want to
14 share the most important aspect of ensuring school
15 safety is a healthy, positive relationship between
16 kids and adults. Far often, you know, incidents are
17 circumvented because someone has reported, has
18 engaged and had a conversation that was a much
19 needed conversation, then we respond and react.

20 You know, incidents during, continuing to
21 look at the used technology, you know, to mitigate
22 potential victims or to increase those that would be
23 impacted by the act of violence; the MOU between law
24 enforcement and local school districts, where school
25 districts give them access to their physical plans,

1 to blueprints, to the technology available,
2 everything from lights to cable television.

3 And then obviously, you know, we can go
4 on and on, but I would like to use this as an
5 opportunity to remind us that we have to think about
6 how we engage, you know, in school safety and
7 security pre-K and higher ed and what we do after,
8 you know, the need to provide communities inside and
9 outside of school with a safe space to decompress, a
10 safe space to speak to a professional.

11 You know, we can't always promise that it
12 will never happen again, but we can always promise
13 that we're going to be there and work to mitigate
14 instances of violence. You know, we don't always
15 focus on that area and we have to do a better job of
16 doing so.

17 MINORITY CHAIRMAN MARKOSEK: Well, I want
18 to thank you for that. And I know there will be
19 other questions relative to this.

20 Let me just, maybe for the information of
21 the members, remind everybody that there are a
22 number of items on the table that I've heard
23 nationally and here and probably some more before
24 we're all done, as far as ideas in making our
25 schools safer. I mean, things like metal detectors

1 in every school or an armed guard in every school or
2 even arming teachers with proper training for many
3 of our schools.

4 But I want all of the members to
5 remember, because this is a budget hearing also,
6 that all of this costs money. We have about 6,000
7 school buildings in Pennsylvania. I think that
8 might even include the private schools, as well.
9 I'm not sure, but nevertheless, that's a big number.

10 So anything we're going to do to guard or
11 defend and things to make safer all of these
12 buildings is going to cost a lot of money. Now, in
13 order to save lives, obviously, additional spending,
14 I think most people would say we need to do that,
15 but it's going to be a huge lift. The legislature
16 is going to have to step up, as well, and provide
17 funds if we want to provide all of these additional
18 safety items in our school.

19 We have to understand that it is going to
20 be very expensive in the long run. It's not going
21 to happen in one year. It's going to be probably a
22 commitment over a number of years. So with that, I
23 applaud what you're trying to do. You're thinking
24 about it. It's high on your priority. It's high on
25 our priority. We look forward to working with you

1 as we move forward.

2 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

3 SECRETARY RIVERA: Thank you, Chairman.

4 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: The next
5 questioner is Representative Jamie Santora.

6 REPRESENTATIVE SANTORA: Thank you,
7 Mr. Chairman.

8 Thank you, Mr. Secretary.

9 I am also going to focus on school
10 safety, but I'm not going to focus all of my time on
11 it. I don't want to seem insensitive to it, but I
12 do know that the House Education Committee is having
13 a hearing on March 15th, which I plan on being at to
14 listen, that's solely focused on school safety.

15 And I do believe we've got to drill down
16 on this because I do believe it's one of the most
17 important things facing us today. However, I think
18 we need to utilize your time properly and talk about
19 all educational issues.

20 So on that, do we know how many schools
21 currently have metal detectors in them across
22 Pennsylvania?

23 SECRETARY RIVERA: We don't know how many
24 schools currently have metal detectors across
25 Pennsylvania, no.

1 REPRESENTATIVE SANTORA: Okay. Is that
2 information that we could get ahold of?

3 SECRETARY RIVERA: That's not something
4 that would be readily available only because it's a
5 purchase of equipment. We do track school resource
6 officers, school police officers, as associated with
7 the grant, but not equipment, per se.

8 REPRESENTATIVE SANTORA: Okay. On that,
9 where are we with school resource officers and other
10 officers?

11 And do they currently carry a gun?

12 SECRETARY RIVERA: Not all carry a gun.
13 There are three classifications. School resource
14 officers, the larger percentage of those individuals
15 carry guns, not all. School police officers, that's
16 around half of those individuals, maybe less than
17 half of those individuals, carry guns. Most
18 security officers do not carry guns.

19 I'm actually, as I'm speaking out loud,
20 I'm trying to find you the specifics. So there are
21 195 school resource officers across the State. One
22 hundred and seventy-four of those individuals are
23 authorized to carry guns. There are one thousand
24 thirty-two school safety officers; 75 or 7 percent
25 of those individuals are authorized to carry guns.

1 And of six hundred and seventy-seven school police
2 officers, 234 of those individuals are authorized to
3 carry guns.

4 REPRESENTATIVE SANTORA: So we do a lot
5 of mandates coming from the State. We mandate
6 testing. We mandate evaluations. We mandate all
7 kinds of things.

8 Is your office planning on mandating
9 anything beyond what is already in place from a
10 safety standpoint for our schools?

11 SECRETARY RIVERA: We've prepared
12 ourselves to engage in the conversation with the
13 General Assembly around, you know, we understand
14 that there is conversation around legislation. So
15 we are not prepared to mandate as a Department.

16 And I will share with you -- I don't want
17 to take up a lot of time, knowing that we'll have
18 more conversation around this -- you can't just
19 mandate -- well, in my opinion, we should not just
20 mandate the employment of a safety professional,
21 SRO, SPO, SSO. We have to understand that there is
22 also significant training that has to go into effect
23 first, and not just traditional law enforcement
24 training.

25 So you know my background is in

1 Philadelphia and in the School District of
2 Lancaster. In all of the schools I've worked in,
3 we've had security measures for, you know, 20-plus
4 years I've been in education.

5 What I've been mindful as an educator to
6 do is understand that there's a psychological and
7 community component to law enforcement that not
8 everyone can fill. And you know where we also look
9 at this proportionality of discipline in certain
10 communities, you know, especially rural and urban
11 communities, when we look at the relationship
12 between law enforcement and rural and urban
13 communities, we have to work in preparation to
14 prepare and address those issues, which aren't just
15 mandate a number, are significant training for those
16 individuals.

17 REPRESENTATIVE SANTORA: I agree, but it
18 doesn't matter where it's at. We've seen it in
19 Florida. We've seen it in Connecticut. It could be
20 in the City of Philadelphia, but it could also be
21 out in Bedford.

22 It doesn't matter when it happens. It's
23 a major tragedy. So we've got to look at it across
24 the board.

25 One of the initiatives that I plan on

1 doing is taking any shale bill that comes before the
2 General Assembly and amending it that half of the
3 funds that are raised will go to school security,
4 because I do believe it's going to require a lot of
5 funding in order to do it the right way.

6 This is new funding that doesn't exist,
7 and it's a new way of looking at it instead of just
8 trying to come up ad hoc with some new funding
9 through taxes to each and every citizen. It's been
10 something that's been out there for a long time.

11 The other concern I have is we hear all
12 of these different ideas, and you did talk on them a
13 little bit, about do we arm teachers, do we arm
14 security guards, do we have metal detectors at every
15 school?

16 A father who lost a daughter in Florida
17 talked about when we had 9/11, the issue was fixed
18 at airports pretty much. We need to take that same
19 approach. I appreciate the House is going to do the
20 hearing. I hope that you're going to participate in
21 it and consider some of those mandates.

22 If we're willing to mandate testing on
23 our kids and we're willing to mandate everything
24 else, this is something we've got to look at, as
25 well.

1 SECRETARY RIVERA: We'll be there.

2 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: Representative
3 Krueger-Braneky.

4 REPRESENTATIVE KRUEGER-BRANEKY: Thank
5 you, Mr. Chairman.

6 Thank you, Mr. Secretary.

7 Just as a follow-up to my colleague's
8 statements from Delaware County. I left here and
9 drove home for a meeting with community members in
10 my school district and a local police chief on
11 Thursday evening. I know this is a very challenging
12 time as everyone is looking to address school
13 safety. I think it's important.

14 And with finite resources, I'm hoping as
15 the General Assembly talks about new mandates, we're
16 also talking about new funding so we're not taking
17 resources out of our classrooms and diverting them
18 to safety resources. I think we need to increase
19 funding across the board to keep our kids safe and
20 to make sure that they're educated to an appropriate
21 level. So I just want to say that for the record.

22 I want to segue to a question about
23 pre-K. Last year during budget hearings, one of the
24 things that has stuck in my mind the most is a
25 comment that the Corrections Secretary made, which

1 was that for every person in our State Prison
2 System, we could be paying for eight kids in high
3 quality pre-K.

4 Then he went on to make the connection
5 between early education, helping to divert folks
6 from the criminal justice system and education being
7 the most important investment we could make. I've
8 seen studies that show that every dollar spent in
9 pre-K results in up to \$17 in savings later on.

10 That to me is a pretty good return on
11 investment for anything, but especially when we're
12 talking about government investment, a \$17 return on
13 investment for every dollar spent is pretty
14 impressive.

15 So can you talk about this year's budget
16 proposal for pre-K?

17 The Governor is proposing to increase the
18 resources to serve about 4400 additional children
19 and this is just another step. The Governor has
20 year after year invested in pre-K, I think largely
21 at the urging of the General Assembly, folks from
22 across the aisle who believe that this is a good use
23 of our resources.

24 So can you tell us, do we still have kids
25 who are eligible and uninsured?

1 Are they spread across the Commonwealth?
2 Are they concentrated in any particular
3 area?

4 Do you have any numbers on that?

5 SECRETARY RIVERA: Absolutely. First, I
6 always like to -- I have to take a moment and really
7 commend my colleague. Corrections Secretary Wetzel
8 does an amazing job advocating on behalf of
9 education in his area and others.

10 Don't tell anyone, but that's why he's
11 one of my favorite secretaries/colleagues out there.

12 You know, I think probably, you know, as
13 I shared, the Governor's 2018-'19 budget will
14 allow -- as you shared, Representative -- 4400
15 additional children to enroll in the State's high
16 quality early learning program; 3,460 in Pre-K
17 Counts and 930 in Head Start. In addition, we're
18 also asking for an \$11.6 million increase in early
19 intervention to serve some of our neediest students.

20 You know, I want to share two areas. The
21 Governor has not only been a staunch advocate to
22 increase early childhood options and opportunities,
23 but he has been very deliberate in ensuring that
24 they're high quality systems. So in addition to
25 asking for more funding, we're also looking at the

1 update of our Pre-K Counts system, you know, to
2 further ensure students who go through the State's
3 early childhood program are kindergarten-ready by
4 the time they enter our K-12 schools.

5 Even with the significant investments
6 we've made to date and the General Assembly and
7 Governor have made significant investments in early
8 childhood education, 61 percent of students who
9 qualify still don't have access across the
10 Commonwealth. And that's all communities, rural
11 communities, urban communities, suburban
12 communities. And we think that even with the
13 additional significant investment we're requesting,
14 we're still hovering at about 59 to 60 percent of
15 students who would not have access to a high quality
16 early childhood program.

17 When I say access, that's three times
18 above the Federal poverty level, so about \$75,000
19 for a family of four. It's not, you know, it's
20 significant. So when you think of the future of the
21 Commonwealth and the fact that we're still hovering,
22 even with major investments the General Assembly and
23 Governor have made, we're still at about that 60
24 percent mark of kids who could still use a high
25 quality early childhood opportunity in their

1 community.

2 REPRESENTATIVE KRUEGER-BRANEKY: So I
3 just want to make sure that I'm clear. So you said
4 61 percent of students who qualify still don't have
5 access.

6 Is that because there's not enough
7 funding to fund the seats where they live or because
8 there are not enough programs where they live
9 geographically or something else?

10 SECRETARY RIVERA: Combination. There
11 aren't enough slots, and then you probably don't
12 have enough programs to create the slots for the
13 students in those communities. The funding
14 definitely drives the opportunity, so it's a matter
15 of funding seats/slots in early childhood and then,
16 of course, the growth of programs offering those
17 slots.

18 REPRESENTATIVE KRUEGER-BRANEKY: And is
19 there anything other than increasing investment that
20 we can be doing from a policy perspective to ensure
21 that that 61 percent of kids get into high quality
22 pre-K?

23 SECRETARY RIVERA: We share OCDEL -- and
24 the Deputy is here. She does an amazing job with
25 the Department of Human Services. They continue to

1 meet and work with partners to find ways to support
2 other programs. So you know, many school districts
3 across the Commonwealth provide coaching, for
4 example, to non-district or State-aligned programs.

5 We have great partners across the
6 Commonwealth that are looking -- I visited a program
7 in Philadelphia a few weeks ago and they were
8 looking at alternative certificate-types of programs
9 and initiatives. They create partnerships, so we're
10 supporting the best we can opportunities to be
11 nimble, to pivot to better meet the need.

12 But I also think, at the end of the day,
13 the first thing they ask when I visit a program is,
14 more funding?

15 The funding definitely helps, but I can
16 really commend most of our early childhood partners
17 across the Commonwealth. They're definitely
18 thinking outside of the box and trying to find ways
19 to best serve their communities.

20 REPRESENTATIVE KRUEGER-BRANEKY: Okay.

21 Thank you, Mr. Secretary.

22 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: Representative
23 Boback.

24 REPRESENTATIVE BOBACK: Thank you,
25 Mr. Chairman.

1 Back to school safety. So looking at the
2 situation, having been a part of the school system,
3 my concern, of course, is where do we go from here?

4 It seems as if many of my school
5 districts, when they consider or if they've employed
6 a school safety officer, it's only in the high
7 school. We know what happened at Sandy Hook
8 Elementary, so my feeling is it's got to be spread
9 out. They've got to have one per school.

10 I realize that there's a cost variable,
11 but what cost is safety? I'm a mother first. I
12 understand that there's that cost variable, and
13 that's something we really need to consider because
14 it's in safety features for our kids.

15 So I developed this legislation on a
16 local level. I had a gentleman come up to me. He's
17 a retired police officer and he said, well, I'd
18 volunteer in that elementary right down the hill,
19 I'd be happy to.

20 It got me thinking, why don't we let the
21 school boards make the decision if, in fact, they
22 have a retired police officer/State Trooper, someone
23 who continues with their certification, volunteer in
24 the school systems and in place disallow their
25 school property taxes; just say, in lieu of your

1 school property taxes?

2 Now, I understand we already have a
3 precedent set with that on local level where school
4 districts can exempt school property taxes. I
5 thought that would be something we should consider.
6 It's out there in legislation. It's still being
7 vetted, but please, you know, I would love your
8 feedback on that. You could give it to me so we
9 don't hold up the Committee.

10 The second thing was, I found out in my
11 queries in the different school districts that some
12 school districts do not have the panic button. It's
13 a cheap little technique that people could use, so I
14 did legislation where it would be put through a
15 school system to strategic locations, but it would
16 be mandated that they would have the panic button,
17 which would override 911.

18 And in our discussion today prior to this
19 hearing, one of my colleagues said every school in
20 his system, his district, has such a thing. So I'm
21 thinking that again, the cost shouldn't be a
22 variable, but that's a cheap way of at least giving
23 one more step to safety.

24 The last thing is the big one, mental
25 health.

1 Where do we go with mental health?

2 Again, in my discussions, I was told by
3 an administrator at one of the school systems that,
4 you know, it's the mental health system that we're
5 lacking in our public schools. And I would include
6 private in that, too.

7 For a high school, many of them have
8 needs, problems. Where do you refer them?

9 They're not available, HIPAA,
10 confidentiality, so we're looking for guidance there
11 because, quite frankly, and I think that's where a
12 root of a lot of the problems are, the mental
13 health. I'm not alone. I mean, that's the big
14 thing that we hear all over the media.

15 Where do we go with that?

16 Because I do believe the records -- a
17 student doesn't keep the record after 16, am I
18 correct?

19 I didn't do my homework on this, but is
20 it up to 16 that their records are expunged if they
21 do something?

22 DEPUTY SECRETARY STEM: We would have to
23 check into that. I don't know what the exact age
24 is.

25 REPRESENTATIVE BOBACK: And I do believe

1 everybody -- you know, you hear boys will be boys,
2 girls will be girls, but in matters that are
3 egregious, there's got to be a record somewhere
4 because we saw in the last catastrophe that,
5 perhaps, had that child, that young man gotten help,
6 who knows?

7 So are you working with the Department of
8 Health to -- you are, okay.

9 So how would you work them into the
10 schools?

11 SECRETARY RIVERA: So not specific to the
12 records piece, but we've been working with the
13 Department of Human Services on what we're calling
14 our Community Schools Initiative. So you may have
15 heard we've documented that as part of our ESSA
16 plan, as part of our plan moving forward to
17 incentivize and encourage community schools across
18 the Commonwealth.

19 I'll give you a couple of great examples.
20 In York County this year, we worked with York City
21 Schools. Last year we started the conversation in
22 York County, to build a relationship between the
23 mental health service provider and the school
24 district to provide those mental health services on
25 site to schools and families, which brings the

1 resources, you know, right in place.

2 We're seeing similar models in the Lehigh
3 Valley. We see it in Lancaster County. We're
4 seeing more of it grow now in Philadelphia through
5 the Community Schools, as well.

6 So first, through pushing community
7 schools to get resources in place, not only around
8 mental health services, but in some places, physical
9 health services and dealing with issues of food
10 security. We've been also working with, you know,
11 with our partners across school districts, you know
12 to make available to -- Well, this works in both
13 ways. One, it also helps DHS meet its mandate, you
14 know, for the support, as well as in addition to
15 schools. You know, we're also really looking to
16 incentivize opportunities to think outside the box
17 in that area where we can allow community partners
18 to come into place and serve our kids, fulfill their
19 mission, you know. Then we can focus on teaching
20 and learning while kids are in the classroom.

21 REPRESENTATIVE BOBACK: And I would look
22 seriously at that line item. If, in fact, you can
23 mandate mental health or getting the Department as a
24 part of the school systems, because, again, what
25 cost, safety?

1 You can't put a price on it.

2 SECRETARY RIVERA: I agree.

3 REPRESENTATIVE BOBACK: So I think that's
4 something that needs to be done. I think that would
5 be a great first step.

6 Thank you for your input. I look forward
7 to working with you.

8 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

9 SECRETARY RIVERA: Thank you.

10 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: Representative
11 Bullock.

12 REPRESENTATIVE BULLOCK: Thank you,
13 Mr. Chairman.

14 Good morning, Mr. Secretary. I believe
15 this week is National School Breakfast Week. I
16 think you always testify before us during that week.
17 It is an issue that is important to me.

18 Last year, I championed school lunch
19 shaming in this Commonwealth and we were able to get
20 language in our School Code prohibiting that
21 practice. It does concern me, however, knowing that
22 we have a community eligibility program, which the
23 United States Department of Agriculture allows for
24 school districts to have high percentages of
25 students who would qualify for free or reduced lunch

1 to apply for and receive schoolwide or districtwide
2 free lunch and free breakfast for those students
3 regardless of income because of the high percentage
4 of students that fall in that category.

5 It is my understanding that the School
6 District of Philadelphia participates in that
7 program and many others, but about half of our
8 schools do not that are eligible, I believe about
9 800, a little bit over 800 or so of the 1700 that
10 qualify.

11 Could you share with me the benefits of
12 school districts participating in that program and
13 what may be some of the obstacles of them not doing
14 that? It's concerning for me because I see that
15 they can save money by having their reimbursements
16 for their school lunches and breakfasts from the
17 Federal government.

18 We can leverage those dollars. And for
19 some reason, we don't have school districts actually
20 applying.

21 SECRETARY RIVERA: So the Community
22 Eligibility Program, as you shared, Representative,
23 is an opportunity for school districts to look at
24 their data around free and reduced lunch eligibility
25 and the number of students in aggregate, so you can

1 take advantage of the numbers and feed all children.
2 Philadelphia does participate.

3 You know, as a result of my experience in
4 Philadelphia, when I moved to Lancaster, we adopted
5 the same program. Many more school districts are
6 adopting. So first, it's exposure. You know, many
7 don't fully understand the nuances of the
8 application.

9 Our Department of Federal Programs has
10 been working to better inform communities that are
11 eligible to participate. We also realize that, you
12 know, this stigma that associates with food
13 insecurity is really coming to light. You know, for
14 some of us where we've grown up and where we've
15 served, it's kind of always been that way. Because
16 of the work of the General Assembly and because of
17 the work of Governor Wolf and First Lady Wolf, this
18 is becoming an issue that's being much more broadly
19 discussed.

20 So this year, we're pushing forward with
21 our school breakfast incentive program, where we're
22 providing grants for school districts to think of
23 non-traditional ways, grab-and-go breakfasts,
24 breakfast in the classroom, to incentivize and push
25 more high school breakfast. You know, we learned

1 that there are many school districts who have kind
2 of -- one just didn't know and kind of just fell
3 within the traditional methods of feeding their
4 children.

5 So I think we'll start to chip away at
6 that number as, you know, we inform more communities
7 about the need. It's funny because you always think
8 of, you know, higher poverty communities in need of
9 these types of programs; it's all.

10 And now we have many more working-class
11 families, middle-class families, you know, even
12 those who tend to be on the upper scale, realizing,
13 I can't afford to pay for a lunch every day or pay
14 for a breakfast every day; this opportunity will
15 ensure that my kid is being fed, you know, and
16 improve my family's quality of life.

17 So we see more and more folks coming out
18 of the woodwork now that you all have worked in the
19 General Assembly, and the Governor has been
20 supporting and working well to lift the stigma
21 around opportunities like this.

22 REPRESENTATIVE BULLOCK: You know, I
23 think you're right. As I looked at the number of
24 school districts and I looked at the names of the
25 school districts, it was across the Commonwealth

1 that were eligible.

2 So you saw you had student populations,
3 30, 40, even as high as 60, 80 percent of the
4 student populations who were not applying for this
5 support and these additional funds. So it was
6 astonishing for me to see that.

7 I'm going to shift gears a little bit.
8 In looking at the basic fair funding formula, the
9 Commonwealth of Pennsylvania ranks very low when it
10 comes to equity and funding our schools, I believe
11 dead last, when you compare how we fund school
12 districts that have lower income populations versus
13 other communities.

14 Can you share with me how we've been
15 implementing the fair formula and how we can improve
16 how we support those school districts?

17 SECRETARY RIVERA: So first, I really
18 have to give credit to the Governor and the
19 General Assembly around the basic education funding
20 formula. You know, it continues -- three years in
21 now, it continues to be one of the most progressive
22 formulas that takes into account the needs of
23 students and school district and community factors.

24 Still today, not all funding formulas
25 across the country do that. The challenge with the

1 funding formula is that it only impacts or it only
2 allocates new funding. So of course, the output to
3 ensure equity of the formula is greatly impacted or
4 it really only matters if there is a significant
5 input to the formula. I think that's where some of
6 the challenges lie.

7 You know, I know better than to share an
8 opinion as to should it be new money, old money,
9 because we lived those conversations when we wanted
10 to enact the formula into law. But you know, I have
11 to go on the record to share that the formula is a
12 good formula. It's a strong formula and really
13 ensures equity, transparency and predictability for
14 school districts, especially after the tweak we made
15 last year to lower the volatility of census data,
16 but you know, I also have to share that there are
17 still school districts through the basic education
18 funding formula that are still trying to, you know,
19 deal with some of their deficit costs and, you know,
20 may create some hardship.

21 REPRESENTATIVE BULLOCK: Thank you,
22 Mr. Secretary.

23 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

24 I have no further questions.

25 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: Representative

1 Hahn.

2 REPRESENTATIVE HAHN: Thank you,
3 Mr. Chairman.

4 Good afternoon, Secretary. I'm on this
5 side. Sorry.

6 Pen Argyl School District, which is one
7 of the school districts in my Legislative District,
8 is participating in the Dyslexia and Early Literacy
9 Intervention Pilot Program. I had to read that.
10 That was a mouthful.

11 So I've been to this school and watched
12 them teach the program. I think it's a great
13 program. The students really seem to be doing well
14 in that. I think we've heard before, you know, you
15 want to make sure all of the students are up to
16 their grade's reading level. So I understand there
17 is a House bill and a Senate bill that continue --
18 extend the pilot program.

19 Are you and the administration in favor
20 of continuing that program and extending it?

21 SECRETARY RIVERA: So we're fully -- the
22 program is a great program. We've met with the
23 representatives from the program. I actually had an
24 opportunity to review the data -- three years' worth
25 of data, right, Matt?

1 I've reviewed the data of the program and
2 they've seen some success. So I want to share my
3 comment in two sections. First, efficacy of the
4 program, strong. It's a good program, strong
5 program, and they do a great job serving students.

6 The flip side, which, unfortunately, as
7 Secretary in sitting here, I have to pivot to
8 discuss the costs of the program. It is a costly
9 program. And although it serves some of our most
10 vulnerable students and does a great job doing so,
11 it does so with a considerable price tag.

12 If the General Assembly were to ask, you
13 know, is it worth funding, should we consider
14 funding it, it's absolutely worth a discussion, but,
15 you know, looking for means to fund this initiative
16 would be extremely important, as well. We just
17 don't have the capacity within the Department to
18 continue to fund the program.

19 REPRESENTATIVE HAHN: But have we seen
20 the PSSA test scores yet from this pilot?

21 SECRETARY RIVERA: Yeah.

22 REPRESENTATIVE HAHN: I mean, don't we
23 need to continue it so we can see how well they're
24 doing with it?

25 I mean, everyone I've talked to that is

1 in the program said, it's great, the students are
2 doing well. Like I said, with me being here and
3 watching them, I was in the classroom, and then I
4 was in with the one-on-one. And you could just see,
5 especially with those that needed the extra help,
6 how much they were improving with that.

7 SECRETARY RIVERA: So Matt Stem is our
8 Deputy of Elementary and Secondary. He and I have
9 discussed the pros and cons of the program
10 extensively.

11 DEPUTY SECRETARY STEM: Yeah. Thank you.

12 I would echo everything the Secretary
13 shared. It's absolutely a quality program.
14 Actually, what they're really doing is focusing on
15 best practices in literacy at the emergent levels,
16 which really are beneficial skills and concepts for
17 all students, not just students with dyslexia.

18 But to the Secretary's point, and I think
19 in what you just related you had seen, a lot of what
20 happens in that project is one-on-one instruction.
21 That's really the primary cost driver. It's not the
22 materials, but it's the staffing component, to be
23 able to provide that one-on-one instruction.

24 But I will say, what we've been doing at
25 the Department is leveraging what's being learned in

1 that pilot so that we can cross that into some of
2 the best practices that we're pushing, for example,
3 in our Statewide Literacy Plan to elevate and inform
4 practices in all schools, because even without the
5 one-on-one components, there are things that they
6 are doing in that model that are just best practices
7 in literacy and in general.

8 So we look forward to continuing to
9 support that project and the good work that's taking
10 place in those schools.

11 REPRESENTATIVE HAHN: I think it's just
12 important, though, and again with the extra help,
13 but the teachers -- to just make it part -- I mean,
14 every teacher would have to be trained for that
15 reading group. So you know, I think with the
16 specialist in there teaching the school -- my
17 grandson was in the class, you know, just in
18 watching them and how well he can read -- first
19 grade was when I went into the class, but have you
20 been to any of the classes?

21 Have you seen the pilot at work?

22 SECRETARY RIVERA: I have not. I know
23 members of our team have. I reviewed the data of
24 the classes that are participating, I think upwards
25 of a dozen times now. Matt reviews it much more

1 often.

2 I've not seen it firsthand, but I have
3 seen the data, which has shown increased literacy.
4 I can't dispute that they've found success.

5 REPRESENTATIVE HAHN: Well, I certainly
6 would like to invite you out to the district to
7 visit Pen Argyl School. The students would love to
8 have you come in. The students were thrilled to
9 have a visitor see how well they were doing.

10 So one quick follow-up. Instead of
11 individuals, is it possible to maybe just have
12 smaller groups, groups of three or four instead of
13 one-on-one?

14 I think when I went in, there were
15 actually three students in that class.

16 DEPUTY SECRETARY STEM: That's correct.
17 So there are elements to the model which focus
18 primarily on decoding. So in other words, how do
19 students pronounce words as they're learning to read
20 in the early grades?

21 You can do those practices in smaller
22 groups and target groups of instruction. That's
23 what we're really trying to take out. It's not PSSA
24 data, but the data sets that they use that
25 demonstrate that it's working, you know, we're going

1 to go ahead and elevate that in other areas.

2 REPRESENTATIVE HAHN: Thank you.

3 And again, please come out to the
4 District. I'd love for you to see them in action
5 out there.

6 SECRETARY RIVERA: I would love to.

7 REPRESENTATIVE HAHN: Thank you.

8 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

9 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: Representative
10 Donatucci.

11 REPRESENTATIVE DONATUCCI: Thank you,
12 Mr. Chairman.

13 Hello again. My colleague,
14 Representative Bullock, actually asked my question
15 about the formula. So having talked about the
16 formula only applying to a small portion, one thing
17 we can do to help is to increase the State's share,
18 something this administration has actually done.

19 So can you tell us what improvements in
20 education you've seen because of this?

21 SECRETARY RIVERA: Absolutely. I think
22 there's a lot, not that I think -- I know there's a
23 lot for us to celebrate together, over the course of
24 the past three years, you know, as a result of the
25 investments made and also some of the alignment and

1 opportunity we've created to school districts.

2 First, we have the data to show that
3 there has been an increase in full-day kindergarten
4 across the Commonwealth, you know, as a result of
5 our investments. We have seen more investments in
6 career and technical education programs. We've
7 increased the number of students who are attaining
8 an industry certificate through those programs, you
9 know, as a result of support and the funding.

10 You know, of course we continue to see
11 increased graduation rates. The percentage of
12 students graduating from high school continues to
13 increase, increased early childhood options. So as
14 a Commonwealth, we absolutely have a lot, you know,
15 to celebrate and really align the investments we
16 made over the course of the past three years
17 together.

18 Of course, there is still work to be
19 done. What we look to do, going into this next
20 year, through the use of our Future Ready PA is to
21 really elevate and take those opportunities for our
22 kids to the next level.

23 REPRESENTATIVE DONATUCCI: Thank you.

24 I have no further questions.

25 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: Thank you.

1 Before we move to the next questioner, I
2 wanted to recognize that we've been joined by the
3 Chairman of the Health Committee, Chairman Kathy
4 Rapp.

5 With that, we move to our next
6 questioner, which is Representative Kampf.

7 REPRESENTATIVE KAMPF: Mr. Secretary,
8 career and technical education in the budget, looks
9 like that's a proposed 80 percent increase, about
10 \$50 million more. Our understanding is that,
11 really, only about a fifth of that extra money,
12 \$10 million, is going to be driven out, according to
13 the formula that we've been using for some time.

14 Can you tell us why you're proposing
15 \$40 million that's not formulaic and what your plans
16 are with that?

17 SECRETARY RIVERA: So you're absolutely
18 correct, Representative.

19 So \$10 million of the increase is going
20 to go to the career and technical education funding
21 formula, which we're proud of. It's the first
22 increase we're providing in about a decade to career
23 and technical education programs. I know our CTE
24 community is extremely excited about the infusion of
25 more funds.

1 The additional funds through the
2 Governor's PA Smart Initiative -- I spoke initially
3 about the initiative earlier -- it's really for the
4 administration. And the Department of Education, of
5 course, included to have funds available to leverage
6 to better create pathways across agencies.

7 I mean, we know that there are career and
8 technical options and opportunities that exist
9 within Labor & Industry, within the Department of
10 Economic Development, within the Department of
11 Education and the like.

12 And what the Governor has envisioned, as
13 a result of the information, of what we heard
14 anecdotally through the Middle Class Task Force, is
15 to create funds that would allow us to be much more
16 synergistic across agencies, to create opportunities
17 for students in K-12, but also adult learners, those
18 who may be transitioning from the workplace, those
19 who may be unemployed, underemployed, those who may
20 be unaccredited or under-credentialed to engage in a
21 job.

22 I will give you two or three examples
23 under PA Smart that we envision. And of course, as
24 with everything, I'm sure some of this will align as
25 we have conversation with the General Assembly and,

1 you know, continue to work to codify this funding.
2 But you know, creating more robust internships, you
3 know, for the business industry and potential higher
4 ed institutions and career and technical education
5 colleges.

6 I shared earlier, Teacher in The
7 Workplace. We realize that we have to -- we can
8 absolutely do a better job of establishing a healthy
9 relationship between teachers and the local
10 businesses and industries we serve, because when our
11 kids leave us in 12th grade, some will go on to the
12 workforce and we have to know what skills are needed
13 for them to be successful. Some will go on to be
14 trained into the workforce and we should be better
15 aligned in K-12 and higher ed to meet the needs of
16 local business and industry.

17 We also realize, through our adult
18 training programs, either partnerships we currently
19 have with L&I, or the WIB, can do a little better.
20 We have robust career and tech education centers.
21 We have libraries doing amazing work around, you
22 know, work-ready opportunities.

23 PA Smart will be intentional. Well,
24 first, the Governor is going to be intentional in
25 telling us we have to do this, but the funding will

1 be intentional and allow us to leverage resources to
2 be much more deliberate around those partnerships.

3 REPRESENTATIVE KAMPF: Just an aside, I
4 did have a comment from a constituent who sometimes
5 draws from the career and technical high schools in
6 my area. He was a little concerned with the quality
7 of training in a couple of the programs.

8 So maybe just a word, if there's some
9 tracking that you could do or give me some idea, a
10 letter of what sort of data you have on
11 employability and how you monitor the programs.

12 I'm going to stop here. The Committee
13 does try to get to a lot of different topics. I
14 have a couple of questions, with the Chairman's
15 indulgence, that I might submit to you on mental
16 health and safety. But thank you very much,
17 Mr. Secretary.

18 SECRETARY RIVERA: And if you can share
19 with the employer, we receive solicited and
20 unsolicited information all the time. We'll send a
21 team out to visit a career and technical education
22 program or center. And I also encourage -- that's
23 why we're incentivizing the 339 Plan. We're really
24 focusing on the 339 Plan in K-12 because they should
25 be utilizing a local business and industry council

1 to drive that plan. And that's the employer's
2 opportunity to have input right into the school's
3 plan.

4 So they should absolutely go visit the
5 principal or superintendent and say, hey, can I sit
6 on that 339 committee, you know, just to share my
7 feedback on what I need for my workforce? Most
8 school districts will thank them for being there, so
9 please share that information.

10 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: Representative
11 Kinsey.

12 REPRESENTATIVE KINSEY: Thank you,
13 Mr. Chairman.

14 Good afternoon again, folks.

15 Mr. Secretary, I want to ask two distinct
16 questions, so I may simply cut you off at a period
17 of time just to get to the second question.

18 SECRETARY RIVERA: No problem.

19 REPRESENTATIVE KINSEY: Please don't take
20 that as an insult.

21 But the first part of my question deals
22 with school safety. I heard you earlier address
23 some of the questions as they related to school
24 safety. I want to talk about some of the internal
25 apparatuses that your Department might have as it

1 relates to dealing with bullying.

2 I received information that stated that
3 the highest rate of death between the ages of 10 to
4 24 is suicide. Some of us believe that there's a
5 correlation of individuals being bullied and simply
6 going out and committing suicide, simply because
7 they're just tired of it. When I talk about
8 bullying, I'm talking about in school, as well as
9 cyber bullying and outside of school, as well.

10 There appears to be an increase, at least
11 in the number of calls that my office is receiving,
12 as it relates to situations of young folks being
13 bullied. So I guess my question to you is, as I
14 look at the budget, the Office of Safe Schools
15 shows, in the line item, shows a decrease of
16 \$26,000 from 2016 to 2017. You're basically asking
17 for flat funding from the previous year.

18 So my question as it relates to that is,
19 are you getting the resources to effectively run the
20 Office of Safe Schools?

21 That's one. And then the other part is,
22 have there been any discussions within your
23 Department to look at incidents of bullying more
24 closely?

25 I'm just afraid that right now it might

1 be at such a level, but years from now, we can see
2 such an increase where folks are committing suicide.

3 Then the second part is going to deal
4 with autism. So I'll let you address that first,
5 then I will come back to the autism.

6 SECRETARY RIVERA: Sure. I'll share
7 three facts quickly. I'm sure Matt is chomping at
8 the bit on this one, as well.

9 First, it's amazing the difference a
10 month can make. When you think about school safety,
11 I mean, we put systems in place, we try to utilize
12 partners to best serve our schools and communities.
13 Then a month later, nothing you do seems like
14 enough.

15 But I will share with you that we created
16 a partnership with Highmark, the Bully Prevention
17 Hotline. On the other end of that hotline, there's
18 a trained professional that can help deescalate and
19 connect with the student and connect them to
20 resources.

21 We also have the school climate survey.
22 We really push schools to participate, and it's free
23 to schools. They can engage their students and
24 staff as part of the survey. And then it will give
25 them, you know, good feedback as to what they need

1 to focus on locally to improve the quality of life
2 of the students they serve.

3 And then, of course, our Office of Safe
4 Schools in partnership with our immediate units
5 around safety and security try to go out and provide
6 as much professional development as possible to
7 schools and school districts as appropriate.

8 I don't know if there's two facts
9 quickly.

10 DEPUTY SECRETARY STEM: Yeah. Just
11 quickly, I would say we did put the Bully Prevention
12 Hotline in place last year, and we do monitor that
13 on an ongoing basis. It's a certified MSW that's on
14 the other line of that.

15 The only other piece I would add is we
16 have a bullying prevention tool kit that we also did
17 in collaboration with the Center for Safe Schools
18 and Highmark. That's online and provides resources
19 for schools that are looking to improve the manner
20 in which they're identifying and dealing with
21 bullying in schools.

22 REPRESENTATIVE KINSEY: I appreciate that
23 and I'd like to maybe meet with you offline to share
24 some additional suggestions that came up from a
25 policy hearing that we held in Philadelphia

1 recently.

2 The second part, very quickly, if I may,
3 I want to talk about the autism spectrum. Data
4 indicates that the number of children with autism
5 spectrum disorder is steadily rising, especially in
6 the preschool population. The Office of Bureau of
7 Intervention Services has convened an early
8 intervention fiscal workgroup to develop a future
9 funding formula.

10 So I guess my question as it relates to
11 that, is part of the mission of this group to ensure
12 appropriate funding for the preschool intervention
13 services for children with disabilities, especially
14 recognizing that these are children that need
15 specialized services, whether it's speech therapy,
16 occupational therapy and so forth on?

17 And also, is this work group put together
18 to address future shortfalls?

19 And then, secondly, maybe if you can just
20 give an update as to where the work group is
21 currently.

22 SECRETARY RIVERA: Sure. First, I can
23 share with you that what you just shared is
24 absolutely on point, which is why we're appreciative
25 of the increase the Governor is recommending in both

1 early intervention and special education, you know,
2 to best support our most vulnerable students.

3 Secondly, the work group is really
4 working. First, looking at the means by which we
5 provide funding, it's currently, as historic
6 government funding pots, you know, of funding that
7 go to different organizations and partners, the
8 conversation that they're actually engaging in now
9 is, is there a better methodology to distribute the
10 funding, based on need, based on clientele, based
11 on, you know, the number of individuals?

12 So that conversation, once they've come
13 to an agreement and an understanding as to how we
14 distribute funds, is going to generate every other
15 question you've asked after.

16 So now that we know how the funding is
17 being distributed based on, you know, a number of
18 factors, is it enough, are we hitting the right
19 population?

20 Do we have the capacity to better serve
21 students?

22 And you know, I'm sure in the very near
23 future, we'll be able to respond accordingly.

24 REPRESENTATIVE KINSEY: Thank you,
25 Mr. Secretary.

1 What I would like to do is send some
2 recommendations to your office to help address that.

3 And Mr. Chairman, I just want to say
4 thank you also for the extended time.

5 Thank you, sir.

6 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: Representative
7 Kinsey, you might want to send that to us at the
8 Appropriations Committee, too. I think all of us
9 would be interested in any ideas or recommendations
10 you have.

11 REPRESENTATIVE KINSEY: Great. Okay.

12 Thank you.

13 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: I just want to
14 follow up on Representative Kinsey's line of
15 questioning a little bit about bullying. You know,
16 that's been a real topic with me in my school
17 districts in York. We've been working on that.

18 I think that's one of the things that we
19 overlook. Some of this created with school safety
20 has been the bullying issue. While I'm not like
21 Representative Markosek who went to a one-room
22 school -- just kidding. Never missed a day.

23 Back in my day, we didn't have, you know,
24 cell phones, let alone all of this other stuff, but
25 we found out with Central York, which was closed for

1 four days due to a threat from a 13-year-old student
2 -- we had a recent town hall meeting.

3 But through the whole process, what we
4 discovered is that parents today are not
5 understanding social media, Snapchat, you name it,
6 I'm not even going to try to name all of the
7 different things that are out there. Parents
8 discovered a lot of bad things as they went through
9 this process, of kids that weren't involved in the
10 thing, but found out other things that they didn't
11 want to know about their children.

12 So our district attorney is going to try
13 and attempt to, with every school that's willing to
14 in York County, have an evening of school education
15 for parents on social media, how to follow your
16 children, how to look it up, how to make sure what's
17 going on -- how to protect your children from
18 pedophiles, to just being safe.

19 I think that's something the Department
20 probably should encourage other school districts to
21 do with the D.A. or law enforcement. I do think
22 that what we don't understand today is, even if
23 bullying did take place back when I was in school,
24 of course, the difference is, you could go home back
25 in my day and get away from it.

1 Today, you can't go home and get away
2 from it because it's every day and it's spread
3 through the Internet and social media. So it's
4 something I think we have to probably do a better
5 job of educating parents on, not just children. We
6 can do whatever we want in our schools, and I'm a
7 real believer that we need to continue doing
8 everything we can to talk to children about bullying
9 and the consequences of it, but we also have to talk
10 to parents about how they can monitor their own
11 children to help protect them, as well as to find
12 out what's really going on out there.

13 I also want to mention that with the
14 Central York, we had a town hall meeting last
15 Wednesday evening. I was very proud of the parents
16 and the administrators, students and teacher, even
17 during the whole incident. Everybody was very calm,
18 asked pointed questions. They didn't do a news
19 conference shouting at any one person or
20 individuals.

21 The way the police department and the
22 school handled it, I'm very proud of. And I'm proud
23 of the parents because these situations can be very
24 volatile, but it doesn't solve the problem. That's
25 why I'm so proud of the way the parents in central

1 York and the administration and the police and law
2 enforcement handled that situation. They handled it
3 methodically.

4 And I think that's something we need to
5 keep in mind as these circumstances take place. We
6 can yell and point fingers at anyone we want. It's
7 easy to point fingers, but the issue is, what are
8 the solutions and how are we going to handle it?

9 So I know security -- I'm taking
10 Chairman's prerogative here a little bit, but the
11 questions came up that I think we all need to
12 address.

13 One of the questions that came up was,
14 how do we protect children after school?

15 After school, kids are coming in and out
16 of the building for football, field hockey,
17 softball, baseball, whatever it is.

18 How do we protect children
19 day-in-and-day-out there, as well?

20 It's not just while the kids are in the
21 classroom. So those are a lot of things. This
22 answer of protecting children is not a simple answer
23 for any of us. So it's something that I think that,
24 as we go through this process and the Chairman of
25 the Education Committee has public hearings, we all

1 need to keep in mind, there is not one thing that's
2 going to fix this.

3 It's going to take all of us monitoring
4 social media and also understanding what we want our
5 schools to look like, as well. So with that,
6 Mr. Secretary, any comments, I will welcome,
7 otherwise I will move on to the next questioner.

8 SECRETARY RIVERA: No. I think when you
9 look at the Central York example, that's a perfect
10 example of how the relationship between adults and
11 students made a difference. When you look at their
12 investigation, when you look at what the ultimate
13 finding was, when you look at the support that, you
14 know, the student ultimately needed, there were
15 school district and community adults engaged in
16 meaningful ways in every step of the way. And
17 that's why we're trying to push heavily around that.

18 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: Yes, I was
19 very proud of the students, as well. They came
20 forward, and in the way they also handled the
21 situation, as well, how they want to move forward.

22 So with that, Representative Dunbar.

23 REPRESENTATIVE DUNBAR: Thank you,
24 Mr. Chairman.

25 Good afternoon, Secretary.

1 I want to talk about the educational
2 access programs line item, where last year it was
3 budgeted \$23 million. This year, the Governor flat
4 funded it at \$23 million. Last year's \$23 million
5 had \$14 million going to the Erie School District.

6 My understanding is that \$14 million has
7 been rolled into their BEF formula; is that correct?

8 SECRETARY RIVERA: For this year to be
9 rolled into BEF, correct. Yes.

10 REPRESENTATIVE DUNBAR: Okay. So that
11 \$14 million is going to come out of the BEF funding
12 line item, so where is that \$14 million going to be
13 allocated this year or does it need to be allocated
14 this year?

15 SECRETARY RIVERA: So the \$14 million
16 this year, as a result of how the allocation was
17 mandated to the Department of Ed by the Fiscal Code,
18 will be taken out of the basic ed formula, by the
19 basic education subsidy.

20 REPRESENTATIVE DUNBAR: Okay. But the
21 \$23 million line item now, who all is going to get
22 this money this year?

23 Or even so, what's the criteria for
24 getting that money in?

25 And who's making that decision?

1 SECRETARY RIVERA: So educational access
2 is usually support for school districts that we
3 inform in terms of the need. We engaged with local
4 community, business managers, school administrators
5 to make the case, so to speak.

6 We then inform the General Assembly and
7 the administration. And usually, at that point in
8 time, we get recommendations by both the General
9 Assembly and administration and then work to
10 facilitate it.

11 REPRESENTATIVE DUNBAR: I can't believe
12 you don't get 500 requests.

13 SECRETARY RIVERA: Oh, we get 500
14 requests. And at the end of the day, you know, I
15 make the recommendation based on the greatest need,
16 but usually, we take our marching orders by the
17 General Assembly and the administration.

18 REPRESENTATIVE DUNBAR: So it's
19 ultimately your decision which school districts are
20 going to get this \$23 million?

21 SECRETARY RIVERA: It's only my decision
22 to inform the process. I ultimately don't make any
23 decision on where it goes. We inform the process in
24 the Department.

25 REPRESENTATIVE DUNBAR: So there is no

1 established criteria, then, for who gets the money
2 or how they get the money?

3 DIRECTOR MARIANO: There is criteria for
4 how they get the money. Yeah, it is a grant process
5 that they go through. So they receive an
6 application, fill out a budget, submit that back to
7 the Department signed. And then it goes through a
8 series of reviews, both internally at our Department
9 and then externally, for example, at the Attorney
10 General's Office, one of the offices that reviews
11 them.

12 REPRESENTATIVE DUNBAR: Thank you.

13 So this year, '17-'18, we had \$23
14 million, \$14 million of which went to Erie.

15 Where did the other \$9 million go?

16 Do we have any type of list or can we get
17 a list of where those dollars actually went?

18 And is it only solely for school
19 districts?

20 Can other entities, other educational
21 entities, apply for this?

22 SECRETARY RIVERA: So we can absolutely
23 -- as I understand the funding, it's not exclusive
24 to just the traditional school district, but we can
25 absolutely forward you the information on who's

1 received educational access.

2 REPRESENTATIVE DUNBAR: I'd appreciate
3 that.

4 DIRECTOR MARIANO: And that is correct,
5 it does go to other types of institutions for
6 educational purposes.

7 REPRESENTATIVE DUNBAR: Yeah, because I
8 saw the list a couple of years ago and it was a lot
9 of libraries and things like that. I just -- I'm
10 not grasping how you get on this list and how
11 certain libraries get money and others don't. It
12 just seems a little bit shaky to me.

13 I appreciate your advocacy for more
14 dollars. You said it this morning; you said it this
15 afternoon. I agree with your advocacy for more
16 dollars, especially in the pre-K arena, but at the
17 same time, I would ask that we're equally diligent
18 in the dollars that we presently spend and make sure
19 that we're getting the right return that we should
20 be. And I think this is an area we certainly need
21 to be looking at a lot closer.

22 Thank you.

23 SECRETARY RIVERA: Absolutely.

24 Thank you.

25 DIRECTOR MARIANO: Thank you.

1 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: Representative
2 Kim.

3 REPRESENTATIVE KIM: Mr. Secretary, good
4 afternoon again.

5 So I'm not going to belabor the bullying
6 issue, but it is a huge issue. I just want to vent
7 for a couple of minutes, Secretary.

8 A lot of us have bullying issues in our
9 districts, but we come together individually and
10 scratch our heads like we're the only ones who have
11 it. And it's not true; it's rampant. It's across
12 the Commonwealth.

13 You are our common denominator. There's
14 got to be at least one school district out of the
15 500 that knows how to combat bullying, who has an
16 awesome program.

17 Why can't we know about it?

18 I think school teachers have some kind of
19 shared platform where they can all talk about best
20 practices. We need that for bullying. Our kids are
21 struggling. They are stressed out to go to school
22 every day.

23 Why don't we know about the other
24 programs, Secretary?

25 Why can't we share this information?

1 Somebody must have a program that's
2 working. I need it for my school district.

3 Do you have a response to that,
4 Mr. Secretary?

5 SECRETARY RIVERA: Sure. So there are a
6 number of programs that work for school districts
7 across the Commonwealth. We do identify those
8 programs through the resources we put online through
9 our tool kit and our SAS portal.

10 You know, the Bully Prevention Hotline,
11 was, you know, an example and a culmination of some
12 of the best practice that's been identified. You
13 know, one of the challenges -- I'm going to take a
14 step back.

15 I totally understand, appreciate and
16 agree with your frustration on this issue. I mean,
17 as Secretary, as an educator, this is an extremely
18 frustrating issue. Part of the frustration is that
19 bullying, like school safety, like meeting the
20 social and emotional needs of kids, you know, like
21 the fact that we can't decouple community issues
22 from schools and the school community, you know,
23 forces us to realize that there is no silver bullet.
24 You know, there is no one program.

25 We have to take into account, you know,

1 issues of social competence and understanding gender
2 competence and the racial nuances of some of it. So
3 what we do in the Department, as we learn about
4 really good programs that exist, we make those
5 programs available as a best practice through the
6 SAS portal. We make it available through our school
7 safety tool kit because what works for me, you know,
8 may not work for someone else.

9 And part of it, probably a great deal of
10 it, is that we're dealing with people. And you
11 know, if you've ever noticed, school districts
12 really mirror the culture, climate and personality
13 of the local community, of the leadership, of the
14 teacher. So we want to make as many resources
15 available so they, you know, educators can choose
16 one that best reflects their values.

17 But that being said, it's a frustrating
18 issue. And I appreciate your sharing.

19 DEPUTY SECRETARY STEM: And if I could
20 just add one more because I didn't sneak it in
21 before. So one of the other things that we did last
22 year, and we continued it into this year, is we
23 worked with the National Center for School Climate
24 and we have put into each one of our 29 IUs an
25 individual that's a lead point of contact for school

1 climate initiatives. And we have 83 schools that
2 are participating in that.

3 One of the reasons that we got involved,
4 and I'll just briefly read it to you here, is that
5 the research indicates when looking at school
6 climate holistically and putting the right
7 leadership in place, that one of the outcomes is
8 lower rates of bullying. That's one of the lower
9 rates of outcomes in those.

10 So we invested in those 29 individuals.
11 We have 83 schools that were on board this year
12 using the school climate tool that the Secretary
13 mentioned earlier. And we're now making decisions
14 about how we move forward, which may include scaling
15 it up in some capacity into next year.

16 REPRESENTATIVE KIM: Yeah, I don't mean
17 to oversimplify bullying and that there's just one
18 solution, but I don't know if my school districts
19 are so busy, but these programs -- I've heard about
20 the hotline for the first time today. It's a year
21 old.

22 Can you give this information out to
23 State Representatives and Senators, because we get
24 the calls from the parents and we're just like --
25 how do we solve this?

1 I would love that kind of resource, so I
2 could push my school district to implement them.

3 SECRETARY RIVERA: And I appreciate you
4 sharing that with us. If you didn't get the
5 information, then we're not doing a very good job
6 communicating it because I launched it in one of
7 your schools. So if we still failed at getting that
8 information out to you, being that we were in a
9 Harrisburg school when we launched the Bully
10 Prevention Hotline, we need to make sure that school
11 district is doing a better job with communicating
12 out to that community.

13 REPRESENTATIVE KIM: My next question is
14 regarding the Infant/Toddler Pilot Program.

15 Can you give us more details on that, in
16 terms of how many children do you expect to serve?

17 Where will the pilots be located?

18 And when you say high quality, does that
19 mean Star 3 and Star 4 locations?

20 SECRETARY RIVERA: What pilot program?

21 DIRECTOR MARIANO: Are you talking about
22 the child care program, additional access to child
23 care?

24 REPRESENTATIVE KIM: The \$3 million that
25 the Governor put towards the Early Education Pilot

1 Program.

2 SECRETARY RIVERA: Yes, that's a DHS
3 initiative, but I will absolutely reach out to them
4 and forward that information to you as quickly as
5 possible.

6 REPRESENTATIVE KIM: I can just ask them
7 tomorrow.

8 They're coming tomorrow, right?

9 Okay. Thank you.

10 SECRETARY RIVERA: I will give them a
11 heads up.

12 Thank you.

13 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: I'm kind of
14 like Representative Kim; I don't want to beat this
15 to death, but I do think that our teachers are a big
16 part. I said about the training and the parents we
17 are going to have to do the training on social
18 media. I do think teachers are going to have to
19 step up, as well, on this bullying issue.

20 I think that teachers see it. Sometimes
21 they may not see the full incident, but I think it
22 is something today that it takes the responsibility
23 of the parents, the teachers and everybody. And
24 there have to be consequences to children who do
25 that.

1 But like I said, I know, Patty, I'm
2 beating the thing a little bit, but I do think by
3 working together, parents and teachers and
4 administrators, by really setting the standard,
5 teachers cannot just wave off and say, well, that
6 was just a minor incident. They have to remind the
7 students that there's a certain code of ethics that
8 students have to follow. If you don't follow it,
9 then there are consequences to those kinds of
10 things.

11 I think sometimes we have this tendency
12 to say, oh, well, it's just today or just something
13 that happened. And I just don't think we can afford
14 that luxury anymore. Teachers have to act on every
15 act, not necessarily where they're expelling
16 students, but they have to remind the student of
17 character, that they're expected to conduct
18 themselves in schools. And as we remind people like
19 that that there is a certain code that they're
20 expected to live up to in school and how they treat
21 each other, it's going to go a long way to changing
22 the student body.

23 But sometimes it's that repeating,
24 repeating, repeating that will help change the
25 character of this bullying situation. So we'll move

1 on to Representative Heffley.

2 REPRESENTATIVE HEFFLEY: Thank you,
3 Mr. Chairman.

4 Thank you, Secretary.

5 Just to follow up on the question earlier
6 regarding the \$14 million. Right now, the \$14
7 million is in the budget for this year, but from
8 your comment, there's no -- it's not assigned to any
9 district right now or it's not assigned to go
10 anywhere?

11 DIRECTOR MARIANO: So the \$14 million is
12 from the '17-'18 educational access. And that money
13 -- the Fiscal Code, as the Secretary spoke earlier,
14 required that to be rolled into the basic education
15 funding formula. So therefore, when we do
16 projections for those amounts moving forward in
17 '18-'19, that will be reflected in the distribution
18 for the basic education funding formula.

19 REPRESENTATIVE HEFFLEY: And directly
20 where will that go, to whose funding formula?

21 Is there a specific district?

22 DIRECTOR MARIANO: Are you asking which
23 school district received it?

24 REPRESENTATIVE HEFFLEY: Yeah, like next
25 year.

1 DIRECTOR MARIANO: So the \$14 million was
2 from the current year ed access. And then the ed
3 access for '18-'19 would be -- the decision about
4 where those funds would go would be made, as the
5 Secretary said, in conjunction of several entities
6 if that money was appropriated and would not be at
7 our discretion as to where it would go. So there
8 are two different funding streams.

9 SECRETARY RIVERA: Are you asking what
10 school district is the \$14 million allocated for?

11 REPRESENTATIVE HEFFLEY: I think we --
12 for this year, but I mean, if that money is in there
13 again next year, it's not going to be allocated to
14 that --

15 SECRETARY RIVERA: So now it's put into
16 their base. So the \$14 million will now go to the
17 base of that school district. So it's imbedded into
18 their overall funding.

19 DIRECTOR MARIANO: It's not coming from
20 the ed access line anymore.

21 REPRESENTATIVE HEFFLEY: All right. Just
22 a couple of quick questions. One is the medical
23 marijuana regulations that will be formulated
24 through the Department of Education. Now that we're
25 starting to see these distribution centers coming

1 up, have those regulations rolled out?

2 I've gotten questions from some of my
3 school districts already.

4 SECRETARY RIVERA: So we're currently
5 still working with our partners in the Department of
6 Health to -- so we have pretty good guidance. We're
7 working on some of the nuances in terms of how it
8 would impact -- I don't want to call it
9 distribution, but how it will impact students who
10 may be in need of that service at schools.

11 REPRESENTATIVE HEFFLEY: Yes. Just if we
12 could get those out there, because I know it is a
13 question that those schools are having and they're
14 just starting to come out and they're looking for
15 that guidance.

16 And my next question, I'm talking about
17 safe schools. And I think a lot of our societal
18 issues, when a lot of us went to school, there were
19 issues, there always are, but it seems like they've
20 gotten much more dangerous and these tragic events.

21 But I wanted to focus a little bit on the
22 opioid epidemic. Now, it's my understanding that
23 many schools across the Commonwealth, school nurses
24 now have Narcan. I wanted to know how many -- do we
25 keep track of the times of Narcan or there's an

1 overdose in a public school in the Commonwealth of
2 Pennsylvania?

3 SECRETARY RIVERA: The school nurses
4 would communicate that information with the
5 Department of Health, but I can absolutely track
6 that down.

7 REPRESENTATIVE HEFFLEY: Okay. So the
8 Department of Ed doesn't have that, that would be
9 through the Department of Health.

10 And also, in some of the conversations
11 and just following up earlier, will you speak to
12 school safety and what lessons we can learn?
13 Because it seems like there are a lot of indicating
14 signs. It seems like in Florida the school really
15 did everything that they could, but there were other
16 things that weren't -- but is there a connection or
17 are there conversations between, say, the Office of
18 Homeland Security?

19 I mean, obviously, we know that, you
20 know, everything is monitored, there are flags that
21 come up on any e-mail or Instagram post or any post
22 like that.

23 Is there any communication between
24 Homeland Security, local police, Federal agencies,
25 faculty and staff if these things -- are there flags

1 that are sent up so that they can be monitored and
2 use the resources that we already have and the data
3 that's already being collected to prevent something
4 like this from happening in the State of
5 Pennsylvania?

6 And what else can be done to enhance
7 that?

8 SECRETARY RIVERA: So we do work
9 extremely closely. I work closely on a personal
10 level with PEMA, our Pennsylvania Homeland security
11 and the State Police around the preparedness aspect
12 of it and the preparation and the communication of
13 it.

14 REPRESENTATIVE HEFFLEY: Well,
15 preparedness, but what about looking at it, you
16 know, before it happens?

17 Are there communications?

18 And I'm just asking, is this data being
19 shared?

20 If we're going to look at school security
21 and everything else, I mean, if we know there's
22 something out there, how do we connect the dots
23 before everything happens to intervene it?

24 And also, looking at mental health and
25 local providers, if there's an issue, are they

1 required to turn that information over to the
2 schools, as well?

3 SECRETARY RIVERA: Not on the mental
4 health section. Of course, you're always dealing
5 with issues of FERPA and privacy laws. We are
6 informed of significant national or local security
7 issues from Homeland Security and then we use that
8 information to coordinate and mostly to share data
9 accordingly.

10 So the bigger issues, you know, we're
11 communicated with. The local issues, you know,
12 whether or not someone may be flagged or have a red
13 flag, we'd have to have a conversation about that
14 and, you know, just work to ensure we're not
15 violating any privacy law.

16 REPRESENTATIVE HEFFLEY: Thank you. And
17 I see I got the red light, but I'd like to see those
18 numbers. I will approach Department of Health about
19 Narcan.

20 Thank you.

21 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: Mr. Secretary,
22 I want to follow up before I go to the next
23 questioner on the education access program.

24 SECRETARY RIVERA: Sure.

25 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: Could you send

1 over to the Appropriations Committee the guidelines
2 and the criteria used to distribute the dollars?

3 SECRETARY RIVERA: To distribute, sure.

4 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: Also, in the
5 current fiscal year, are all of the dollars
6 allocated, do you know?

7 DIRECTOR MARIANO: The majority of them
8 have been, but not all.

9 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: Not all?

10 DIRECTOR MARIANO: Yes.

11 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: Okay. The
12 next question I have is, do we notify every school
13 district in the State of these funds and the
14 availability for them to apply?

15 SECRETARY RIVERA: We don't.

16 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: And may I ask
17 why?

18 SECRETARY RIVERA: It's not been a
19 practice. It's definitely worth considering. It's
20 probably one of the areas that I've just continued.
21 You know, State practice has been in place longer
22 than I can remember, but we just followed the
23 established practice.

24 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: I think,
25 again, going along the line of questioning today

1 with this particular program, I would say the
2 feeling is that it's for special people who come
3 from certain areas of the State. And I'm not saying
4 any one particular area.

5 And I think if we're going to have a
6 program that is truly a grant program, based upon
7 certain criteria, all need to be eligible for it.
8 We in the General Assembly should not be focusing on
9 one particular region, one particular school
10 district or any one particular function.

11 I think many members here on both sides
12 of the aisle want to make sure that their school
13 districts are as eligible for these kinds of grants
14 as everybody else's. So if you would get that kind
15 of information over to the Appropriations Committee
16 for the Committee members --

17 SECRETARY RIVERA: Will do.

18 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: -- to follow
19 up on, as well, but I would suggest that in the
20 future that all school districts be notified or all
21 eligible people who meet the criteria should be
22 notified that there are these grants available.

23 SECRETARY RIVERA: Sure. I'm confident
24 in saying the four years that we've been able to
25 work together now, I'm always asking for more

1 resources for all schools and school districts
2 across the Commonwealth. So you know, of course, I
3 will always work with the General Assembly and
4 administration to resource accordingly.

5 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: And
6 Mr. Secretary, I also don't want to indicate that
7 you or the Governor or anybody else is responsible
8 for a program that most likely the General Assembly
9 may have created. So it's not like I'm pointing a
10 finger or I got you. It is all members of the
11 General Assembly in being more transparent. That's
12 one of the things that we're all talking about right
13 now, being more transparent.

14 I want both Democratic and Republican
15 members from all across this State to be eligible
16 for these kinds of programs. And if we're not
17 notifying members or the school districts, it seems
18 like it's exclusionary. So I would appreciate that
19 information as we move forward.

20 With that, we go to Representative
21 Schweyer.

22 REPRESENTATIVE SCHWEYER: Thank you,
23 Mr. Chairman.

24 Mr. Secretary, over here. Thank you for
25 joining us today.

1 You know, Ulysses S. Grant was a pretty
2 interesting President. When he was President, he
3 created the Department of Justice. He invested
4 quite a bit in southern reconstruction. There were
5 brand new railroads that were built across America
6 and the Allentown School District built classrooms
7 that are still in use today during the Ulysses S.
8 Grant presidency.

9 My children are both students in the
10 Allentown School District, whereas their school was
11 built in the, I believe 50s, and not built in the
12 1800s -- I still have children that I represent that
13 are in classrooms today that were built in the
14 mid-to-late 1800s.

15 We didn't have electricity in any kind of
16 meaningful way in these buildings. So we've talked
17 a lot in previous budget sessions about PlanCon and
18 our overall strategy of addressing the backlog of
19 projects that have been in the pipeline. However,
20 you know, as we look at the financials of it, toward
21 the tail end of it we're paying nothing more than
22 debt service and we're really not addressing the
23 physical buildings.

24 Can you expand a little bit upon where we
25 are with PlanCon, where we're going with it?

1 In your opinion, the bonding that we did
2 previously, is that going to give us enough to not
3 only address what we need, but also our future
4 needs, sir?

5 SECRETARY RIVERA: So the bonding and the
6 allocation approach provided by the General Assembly
7 allowed us to clear the queue on PlanCon projects.
8 However, there is currently a PlanCon moratorium
9 while the PlanCon Committee continues to meet and
10 work to make recommendations to the General Assembly
11 on the next life of PlanCon. But we are confident,
12 based on the bond that the General Assembly and the
13 administration procured, that the current allocation
14 that the General Assembly and administration provide
15 year after year will make all of our obligations
16 under the old queue, so we've cleared that.

17 REPRESENTATIVE SCHWEYER: Okay. So
18 you're confident that the funding that we passed, I
19 believe it was last year, through the bond is going
20 to give us the opportunity to clear that queue and
21 PlanCon is currently in the process of looking at
22 additional projects for a future potential pile of
23 projects, perhaps, depending on the moratorium maybe
24 and that's only to catch us up to where we were 10
25 years ago-ish?

1 SECRETARY RIVERA: In full transparency,
2 we're not looking at or paying attention to any new
3 projects. I mean, we are absolutely informing
4 school districts that they can start new projects,
5 however, we're totally neutral on the availability
6 of reimbursement funds, just to be --

7 REPRESENTATIVE SCHWEYER: Right. So
8 school districts are on their own if they want to do
9 anything at this point in time?

10 SECRETARY RIVERA: If they want to start
11 now, during the moratorium, they're on their own.

12 REPRESENTATIVE SCHWEYER: Okay. That
13 might be great for some districts.

14 SECRETARY RIVERA: But then again, we'll
15 always work with the General Assembly to --

16 REPRESENTATIVE SCHWEYER: Duly noted.

17 While I have a little bit of extra time,
18 switching gears from the physical infrastructure to
19 some of our performance measures that are out there.

20 The Future Ready PA Index, tell us a
21 little bit about how it's going to assist in our
22 school performance measurements, et cetera, et
23 cetera.

24 SECRETARY RIVERA: Future Ready PA is
25 absolutely a point of pride for us in the Department

1 of Education. We've worked extremely hard to come
2 up with a system of measurement, a forward-facing
3 system of measurement, that really took into account
4 the will and expectations of all of our stakeholders
5 and how to best ensure student preparedness to
6 college career readiness opportunities.

7 So first, you know, of course, both
8 through Federal mandate, and we also know that there
9 is value in looking at achievement. So you know, we
10 continue to use our achievement score, but we've
11 added growth to that achievement score. We don't
12 only want to look at static achievement, but we want
13 to be able to focus on growth and show that students
14 are improving year to year.

15 We're also looking at what we identify as
16 on-track measures. These are the indicators that
17 research shows it works to identify the
18 opportunities to lower the drop-out rate and improve
19 and increase the graduation rate; reading level
20 attainment; math level attainment; English
21 acquisition for English learners; meeting the needs
22 of special needs students, chronic absenteeism.

23 And probably the third area that really
24 is an outlier for, you know, States across the
25 country are college and career readiness standards,

1 incentivizing college-ready programs, APIB, dual
2 enrollment, career and technical education programs
3 in the 339 plan, starting as early as elementary
4 school. That is an amazing distinction we have here
5 in the Commonwealth. We are pretty sure there is no
6 other meaningful elementary school college
7 career-ready standard anywhere in the country.

8 And yet we're starting with our youngest
9 learners to align and ensure they have the knowledge
10 to start to gain an understanding of college and
11 career pathways. Middle school looking at career
12 inventories, as was shared earlier, it's part of our
13 expectation of the 339, then high school career
14 pathways.

15 So Future Ready PA is a new way of
16 looking at education and educational standards. And
17 it's forward-facing, so every parent, every
18 community member -- and I know you'll look at it for
19 your little ones, you'll have access to exactly how
20 your school is doing in each and every one of those
21 factors. And they're meaningful. Then you can then
22 hold them accountable locally.

23 REPRESENTATIVE SCHWEYER: Great. Thank
24 you so much.

25 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

1 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: Representative
2 Quinn.

3 REPRESENTATIVE QUINN: Hi. Thank you.
4 Over here.

5 I'm going to follow through on what the
6 Chairman was asking in a previous question about the
7 access programs. It piqued my curiosity when the
8 question was asked, were all of the dollars from
9 last year allocated; and the answer was, they were
10 not.

11 What's left over right now?

12 Well, the reason is, we're into March.
13 If they're that critical of dollars and we're asking
14 for the same amount next year, I'm just surprised
15 why they're not all doled out.

16 DIRECTOR MARIANO: Part of that is the
17 length of time that it takes to go through the grant
18 process. You know, for example, it can take some
19 time, once the school receives the application, for
20 them to get it back to us. And the review process
21 itself is quite lengthy. So some of the allocations
22 haven't come to fruition. The money has not been
23 paid yet because of the length of time.

24 REPRESENTATIVE QUINN: Okay. So not only
25 are not all school districts made aware of it, but

1 school districts are actually sent the application?

2 DIRECTOR MARIANO: When they've been
3 identified as receiving a grant, they have to
4 receive the application to apply for it.

5 REPRESENTATIVE QUINN: That sounds like
6 it's the reverse, just so I could repeat.

7 You said, when they've been identified as
8 receiving a grant, they then get the application to
9 apply for it.

10 DIRECTOR MARIANO: Correct.

11 SECRETARY RIVERA: Educational access
12 recipients are generally school districts that have
13 been identified by the General Assembly and
14 administration, and then the Department of Education
15 facilitates the process.

16 REPRESENTATIVE QUINN: Is that something
17 we've ever voted on?

18 Does the General Assembly vote in an
19 identification process?

20 SECRETARY RIVERA: That has existed well
21 before my tenure, but I can research that.

22 REPRESENTATIVE QUINN: Yeah, I just don't
23 know. That's why I'm asking.

24 I just don't ask a question I know the
25 answer to. That will waste all of our time.

1 I'm going to move on. Okay. Earlier I
2 asked questions about the employee liability
3 insurance payouts. I'm going to take those same
4 questions from this morning and ask that you get
5 back with information with regard to what, if any,
6 payouts were made under that program for employees
7 of the K-12 or pre-K-12.

8 And also, what, if anything, is in the
9 collective bargaining agreements to hold that
10 teacher accountable or that school personnel
11 accountable if payouts had been made on their behalf
12 for that?

13 SECRETARY RIVERA: Okay.

14 REPRESENTATIVE QUINN: Okay. Thank you.

15 SECRETARY RIVERA: We would be able to
16 provide that information from the State agency
17 perspective.

18 REPRESENTATIVE QUINN: That's what I'm
19 asking for, from the State agency perspective.

20 SECRETARY RIVERA: Oh, okay, from the
21 state agency perspective.

22 REPRESENTATIVE QUINN: I'm not asking for
23 an individual breakdown, just that.

24 SECRETARY RIVERA: Just clarifying, thank
25 you.

1 REPRESENTATIVE QUINN: Third topic.
2 Recovery high school pilot program. I recall that
3 was put into last year's budget. It was like
4 \$250,000 for a drug and alcohol recovery high school
5 pilot program.

6 Was an RFP issued for that?

7 Where are we with that whole program?

8 It was supposed to be down in the
9 southeast. At least I know it was initiated down in
10 the southeast, and I haven't heard anything about
11 that.

12 So has there been an RFP issued for that?

13 SECRETARY RIVERA: I want to do my due
14 diligence in that area. I was under the
15 impression -- and I don't think I'm wrong, but I
16 could be -- that the recovery schools, I believe,
17 the school or the program was already identified in
18 and in existence, so we were funding -- the funds
19 were made available to an already existing program.

20 So it wasn't the creation of a new
21 program. It was a program that existed that wasn't
22 funded, and the General Assembly worked with the
23 administration to fund an existing program.

24 REPRESENTATIVE QUINN: So the program --
25 I thought that was a new initiative from last year.

1 DIRECTOR MARIANO: It was a new
2 initiative. I think what the Secretary is saying is
3 that there wasn't an RFP because it already existed
4 as a potential -- as a program, and this was the
5 first time that additional funds, State funds,
6 were --

7 SECRETARY RIVERA: Available to grow
8 the --

9 REPRESENTATIVE QUINN: So this program is
10 ongoing now?

11 DIRECTOR MARIANO: Yes.

12 SECRETARY RIVERA: Yes.

13 REPRESENTATIVE QUINN: In how many
14 different schools?

15 SECRETARY RIVERA: It's one school to
16 serve that population.

17 REPRESENTATIVE QUINN: Are there any
18 metrics that you can share with us?

19 Did this start off in September?

20 Did it wait till January?

21 I recognize that the budget was late, but
22 where are we with it, so we could take a look at its
23 success?

24 SECRETARY RIVERA: We can definitely pull
25 the metrics and share them with you. The allocation

1 was provided once the budget was put in place and
2 there were pretty clear expectations as relates to
3 the Department of Education and support from drug
4 and alcohol and other agencies, as well.

5 So we'll connect with our other agency
6 partners and pull as much information for you as
7 possible.

8 REPRESENTATIVE QUINN: Do you have an
9 estimate of what size population it is serving in
10 that school?

11 SECRETARY RIVERA: I believe it's as
12 needed, so it's an on-need program. So I don't want
13 to misspeak. I'll just pull the current numbers for
14 you and share with you.

15 REPRESENTATIVE QUINN: Okay. So it's an
16 as-needed program, but just focused in one school?

17 DIRECTOR MARIANO: Right.

18 REPRESENTATIVE QUINN: Okay.

19 DIRECTOR MARIANO: It's focused in one
20 school. I believe the population initially was
21 fairly small. I don't remember the exact number,
22 but the support that we're providing from the State
23 is based on -- is a tuition that's being paid for
24 those students, so I don't think it's a huge number.

25 We can get you that specific, but --

1 REPRESENTATIVE QUINN: -- wrap-around
2 services to include the family?

3 DIRECTOR MARIANO: That would be
4 something I think we would have to look into, unless
5 someone --

6 SECRETARY RIVERA: No. So it's not
7 necessarily a program created by the Department of
8 Education. It was a program identified in
9 conjunction with the General Assembly and the
10 administration that was funded. So this is -- we
11 pretty much would have to do our due diligence as we
12 would with any program outside of the Department of
13 Education to identify the factors, but we'll
14 absolutely do that.

15 REPRESENTATIVE QUINN: Thanks. Just
16 since the money is coming through there.

17 SECRETARY RIVERA: Absolutely.

18 REPRESENTATIVE QUINN: Or else my
19 question would have been more appropriate for
20 tomorrow, but since it does go through you and into
21 a school, I'm curious.

22 Thank you very much.

23 SECRETARY RIVERA: Absolutely.

24 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: Representative
25 James.

1 from it?

2 SECRETARY RIVERA: So Future Ready PA,
3 other than our Federally mandated assessments, which
4 is the first third of achievement, the other factors
5 are factors that most schools already collect on
6 reading level, math level, chronic absenteeism, the
7 339 Plan. We're just elevating their status and
8 their statutes. So that should not force the
9 occurrence of more finances and resources.

10 The budgetary, the financial tracking is
11 something that, you know, in other words, a
12 moratorium at the Federal level around the need to
13 fulfill that obligation, it's something that we're
14 currently working on with our internal team to
15 figure out how we're going to engage in that project
16 because that one is new, not only for us here in the
17 Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, for most States across
18 the country.

19 We've been working with technical
20 advisory committees that are working with other
21 States just to better understand and learn what
22 other States are doing to fulfill this obligation.
23 Most States are struggling. We've not yet found,
24 you know, one area where we said, we're going to do
25 that. We're going to, you know, use your best

1 practice to facilitate our practice.

2 We're not there yet. It's still a real
3 significant work in progress.

4 REPRESENTATIVE JAMES: Then I would say,
5 I guess, on behalf of the superintendents and the
6 teachers in our 500 school districts, those details
7 are very critical.

8 Do you have any kind of a timeline of
9 when you'll be able to give them that?

10 SECRETARY RIVERA: Yeah. So we're going
11 to work, you know, right up until -- I mean, we're
12 not going to -- we're not going to try to start to
13 submit that data any sooner than the Federal
14 government expects, than the Department of Education
15 expects us to.

16 We're going to work right up until the
17 deadline and then communicate with schools and
18 communities accordingly. Now, we have made it our
19 practice -- I'm just, you know, fully understanding
20 all of us have worked in school districts, you know,
21 to communicate new information well before the end
22 of a school year to allow for the summer, you know,
23 and the beginning of a school year to facilitate.

24 So we absolutely are always mindful in
25 everything we do around the school calendar and

1 everything we need to do to communicate.

2 REPRESENTATIVE JAMES: Thank you,
3 Mr. Secretary.

4 If it's okay, I will ask you the same
5 question next year.

6 Thank you.

7 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

8 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: Representative
9 Greiner.

10 REPRESENTATIVE GREINER: Thanks,
11 Mr. Chairman.

12 Good afternoon again, Mr. Secretary.

13 Going to switch gears to agriculture.

14 I'm very fortunate in my district to have just an
15 outstanding school that teaches agricultural
16 education. Recent changes to the public School Code
17 created the Commission for Agricultural Education
18 Excellence, which is a commission under the
19 concurrent authority of both the Department of
20 Agriculture and the Department of Education, which
21 requires both Departments to provide staff to assist
22 the Commission with its duties.

23 And I know that a quarter of a million
24 dollars was earmarked in the Department of
25 Agriculture's 2017-2018 budget for this purpose. I

1 guess, several questions.

2 Have you and Secretary Redding made
3 efforts to identify existing employees who could
4 fill the specific required roles and start a search
5 for an executive director?

6 That would be the first question.

7 SECRETARY RIVERA: So Secretary Redding
8 and I have met to discuss the Commission, the
9 requirements of the General Assembly, of the
10 Commission. He and I have not yet met to discuss
11 the specifics around who the executive director
12 should be, but we did just receive -- I did just
13 receive, last week, the recommendation of the
14 Commission by the General Assembly, so that
15 triggered some review on our part, but it is a
16 conversation that the Department of Agriculture and
17 PDE are currently having.

18 REPRESENTATIVE GREINER: And then to
19 follow up, have you identified a source of funding
20 from the Department of Education to fulfill your
21 agency's responsible for the agricultural education
22 for the '18-'19 fiscal year?

23 SECRETARY RIVERA: No, we have not.

24 REPRESENTATIVE GREINER: Okay. And then,
25 this was discussed also in a variety of ways. The

1 budget, of course, contains this \$50 million for
2 career and technical education, which I know many of
3 us here are very supportive of within your
4 Department. Given this new funding and the
5 importance of the Commission for agriculture
6 education -- and I know Secretary Redding would
7 probably agree with agriculture being such a key
8 industry in our Commonwealth -- to help with early
9 workforce and career development opportunities, do
10 you think that some of this funding would be
11 available for this Commission's operations and for
12 its initiatives?

13 SECRETARY RIVERA: No, I don't think so.
14 Understanding the intent of Pennsylvania Smart, of
15 PA Smart, as we're looking to align other dollars,
16 it's not my understanding that the funding is to be
17 made available for specific positions in that way.

18 REPRESENTATIVE GREINER: In that way. I
19 will say, though, and like I said, I had an
20 opportunity to tour the school where my district
21 office is, and it's pretty impressive when you talk
22 about the technical, you know. You talk about ag
23 classes, and it's not just planting crops. It's
24 small engine repair and a variety of things.

25 It's very impressive. I'm glad to see

1 the legislature worked on this, but I did want to
2 bring that, with my district being so highly
3 agricultural, I thought it would be important that I
4 ask you that question today.

5 SECRETARY RIVERA: And you raise a good
6 point, if you don't mind me just --

7 REPRESENTATIVE GREINER: Sure.

8 SECRETARY RIVERA: -- my indulgence for a
9 few minutes. That's one of the opportunities and
10 the challenges within this shift. When we look at
11 the Commission and we look at the support of
12 agriculture across the board, we currently have two
13 vacancies in career and technical education that
14 align, you know, to some of the agriculture
15 programs. We're looking at the work of the
16 Commission.

17 And you know, we realize that agriculture
18 has evolved significantly. So what we've had to do,
19 you know, is creating a vision and a mission of
20 understanding agriculture that it's no longer just
21 farming, it's agro-business, you know, agro-science,
22 forestry. So we've already started to work to
23 create that alliance around standards. Now it's
24 finding individuals that no longer see agriculture,
25 you know, as it's been historically viewed and more

1 as a STEM-related field and future workforce.

2 So that is kind of where the traditional
3 world of agriculture is telling education to hurry
4 up, but education is saying, no, we're preparing
5 ourselves for a future-ready workforce. We need to
6 find the right individuals.

7 Honestly, I also have to find the funding
8 to pay for those individuals, but it's not something
9 we're going to get done in a week.

10 REPRESENTATIVE GREINER: No, that's fine.
11 I appreciate it. And like you said, I think we have
12 in our own minds -- I think even people back home,
13 when they think of agriculture, it's just amazing
14 when you think of how diverse it is.

15 My dad is an agricultural engineer, you
16 know, with farm machinery, but I'm just saying, we
17 have a lot of opportunities inside that industry to
18 help in this type of thing. So I appreciate your
19 time today, Mr. Secretary.

20 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

21 SECRETARY RIVERA: And on the record, I'm
22 committed to agriculture and the education of
23 agriculture. I want to make sure I don't come
24 across as not supporting the program. We are very
25 supportive of the program.

1 REPRESENTATIVE GREINER: Very
2 appreciative of that. Thank you so much.

3 SECRETARY RIVERA: Thank you.

4 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: Mr. Secretary,
5 I'm going to follow up with just a quick question.

6 Are you committed to getting that
7 position filled in the next 30 to 60 days?

8 SECRETARY RIVERA: We are committed to
9 getting the position filled. You know, I'm always
10 honest with you, Chairman, and the members of the
11 General Assembly. I have to try to find a way to
12 leverage the funds for that position. We're trying
13 to maintain a pretty streamlined complement. We're
14 working on it.

15 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: Well, we put
16 \$250,000 in the line. There should be no problem
17 with the funds. It should be a matter of going
18 through the process and getting it done. There's
19 been a vacancy --

20 SECRETARY RIVERA: Oh, the executive
21 director? I'm sorry. Yes.

22 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: Okay.

23 SECRETARY RIVERA: I thought you meant
24 the Department of Education agricultural position;
25 executive director, yes.

1 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: I mean, it's
2 something that the General Assembly -- it has sat
3 vacant over there, the previous Director for Ag. I
4 think it's very critical that the General Assembly
5 put it in there, specifically, because we want to
6 see that filled and move forward. It's so critical
7 today, Pennsylvania's number one industry.

8 So thank you very much. With that, we'll
9 move on to Representative Grove.

10 REPRESENTATIVE GROVE: Thank you,
11 Chairman.

12 Good afternoon. How are you?

13 SECRETARY RIVERA: Good afternoon.

14 REPRESENTATIVE GROVE: Good. I want to
15 start with authority rentals and sinking fund line
16 item.

17 What exactly is that going to?

18 DIRECTOR MARIANO: That line item goes to
19 pay for the reimbursement of charter schools, as
20 well as to pay for legacy or existing payments for
21 the PlanCon Program to school districts.

22 REPRESENTATIVE GROVE: Okay. How much of
23 it is for the reimbursement for charter leases?

24 DIRECTOR MARIANO: About \$10.5 million.

25 REPRESENTATIVE GROVE: About \$10.5, so

1 that leaves \$130-some odd million.

2 DIRECTOR MARIANO: Correct.

3 REPRESENTATIVE GROVE: And that is going
4 for school reimbursements?

5 DIRECTOR MARIANO: Correct.

6 REPRESENTATIVE GROVE: Construction?

7 DIRECTOR MARIANO: Correct, through the
8 PlanCon Program.

9 REPRESENTATIVE GROVE: So there's about
10 \$168 million available through the bonding for this
11 fiscal year, if I'm not mistaken.

12 Is that separate from that?

13 DIRECTOR MARIANO: Both funding streams,
14 both the bond and the appropriation, are used to pay
15 for what we refer to as legacy payments. So those
16 payments that are for schools that are already in
17 the program receiving reimbursement and/or those
18 moving through the process then become eligible for
19 reimbursement.

20 REPRESENTATIVE GROVE: But isn't the bond
21 supposed to take care of the legacy payments?

22 DIRECTOR MARIANO: It's my understanding
23 that the bond was meant to wipe out the backlog that
24 existed. As I believe the Secretary mentioned
25 earlier, there was a queue of projects that had

1 become eligible for reimbursement, but had not been
2 able to receive payment for several fiscal years.
3 The bond did achieve that and those were all paid in
4 full.

5 They are now receiving their regular
6 reimbursement payments. It's my understanding the
7 bond was meant to alleviate the need for a large
8 appropriation and that it was never meant to pay off
9 the PlanCon Program nor be the sole source of
10 revenue.

11 REPRESENTATIVE GROVE: So is this for new
12 projects?

13 DIRECTOR MARIANO: No.

14 REPRESENTATIVE GROVE: Current projects
15 that are in the system, so step A, B, C.

16 What are we talking about?

17 DIRECTOR MARIANO: They're all through,
18 so with the moratorium what was put in place, any
19 project that got in before the end of that
20 moratorium began is still moving through the steps
21 of the PlanCon process and will be eligible for
22 reimbursement when it reaches part H.

23 So we have projects that are at different
24 stages throughout that. As you pointed out, A, B,
25 up through F, G; and then, once they get to H,

1 that's when they start to receive reimbursement.

2 REPRESENTATIVE GROVE: So the \$130 is to
3 take care of all of those projects this fiscal year?

4 DIRECTOR MARIANO: The \$130 takes care of
5 any projects that are continuing to be reimbursed,
6 because as you may know --

7 REPRESENTATIVE GROVE: So let me ask
8 this, the \$168 that's currently sitting there
9 unused, what is that there to cover?

10 Why do we need \$130 million more?

11 DIRECTOR MARIANO: Again, it was helpful,
12 I believe, with the structure of the bond, as well,
13 to have it balance with an appropriation to also pay
14 for those payments. Those payments will continue to
15 come through. And we use the appropriation money,
16 but then we use the bond. It doesn't cover the
17 total amount of the legacy payments.

18 SECRETARY RIVERA: In clearing out the
19 queue, the bond covered the number of years of
20 PlanCon reimbursement. The difference between the
21 total cost and the appropriations, that's what the
22 bond covered. The bond was not secured to cover the
23 full cost. It took appropriation into account every
24 year for the next 20 years.

25 DIRECTOR MARIANO: Twenty --

1 twenty-eight, actually.

2 REPRESENTATIVE GROVE: Okay.

3 DIRECTOR MARIANO: And if you're talking
4 about the money that's in the restricted account for
5 the bond --

6 REPRESENTATIVE GROVE: Yes.

7 DIRECTOR MARIANO: Yes, that will
8 continue to pay for legacy projects, you know, every
9 year. And it also pays for when a project comes to
10 the end. You know, they're required to have an
11 audited final cost, the school district. So that's
12 a part J.

13 And when that is submitted, there is
14 sometimes a differential between the two. It would
15 go towards the part Js that are still out there that
16 haven't been submitted yet. It would cover all of
17 the existing costs in the program for the projects
18 that are currently being reimbursed or moving
19 through it.

20 REPRESENTATIVE GROVE: Because my
21 understanding of the entire bond process was there
22 was a need for an appropriation because the CFAs can
23 be paid out of the sales tax revenue.

24 DIRECTOR MARIANO: That's correct.

25 REPRESENTATIVE GROVE: So there was no

1 need for an appropriation under that line item, set
2 aside a new PlanCon process. Obviously, there's a
3 PlanCon Commission that's still out there, that we
4 don't have a final determination moving forward.

5 And one final part of that, there's a
6 proposal to move \$1.85 million out of PlanCon
7 payments for general government operations.

8 Are you pursuing that again, as well?

9 DIRECTOR MARIANO: Yes.

10 REPRESENTATIVE GROVE: So you're asking
11 \$130 million in a line item to fund projects, and
12 then you want to bond money for a GGO?

13 DIRECTOR MARIANO: That money has already
14 -- the bond has already been taken out.

15 REPRESENTATIVE GROVE: So you've already
16 used bond money to pay operational costs?

17 DIRECTOR MARIANO: We were granted a fee
18 through the bond.

19 REPRESENTATIVE GROVE: So that is a
20 fee --

21 DIRECTOR MARIANO: Yeah, a fee. A CFA,
22 excuse me, approved that fee.

23 REPRESENTATIVE GROVE: Approved a fee.

24 I guess what was your role in the PlanCon
25 process?

1 Wouldn't that already have staff
2 appropriated to it, under your GGO?

3 Why would you need to dip into bond money
4 for that \$10 million?

5 I guess the bigger question is --

6 DIRECTOR MARIANO: It was authority
7 granted to us by the statute.

8 REPRESENTATIVE GROVE: You're asking for
9 \$130 million in General Fund revenue and you're
10 paying your staff out of bond revenue. To me,
11 financially, that doesn't make sense.

12 Wouldn't you just be better off, instead
13 of asking for \$130, taking that money out of that,
14 instead of bonding the operational costs for 20-some
15 odd years?

16 DIRECTOR MARIANO: Again, it's my
17 understanding that when the bond was entered into,
18 it was never meant to make the appropriation
19 completely go away. It was merely to alleviate --

20 REPRESENTATIVE GROVE: Well, we're
21 talking the staff allocation now. I mean, you
22 borrowed money for operational funds for the
23 Department and you're asking for \$130 million in a
24 line item.

25 Wouldn't it be financially better just to

1 fund your GGO through the General Fund instead of 30
2 years over a bond initiative?

3 SECRETARY RIVERA: As we were looking at
4 the specific PlanCon reimbursement and the staff
5 associated with the PlanCon reimbursement, we were
6 given the allowance to use the fee to cover the
7 staff. So, of course, me trying to find ways to
8 cover staff that served the General Assembly --

9 REPRESENTATIVE GROVE: I mean, it's
10 covered through your GGO, your staff.

11 Did you hire new people?

12 Is there --

13 SECRETARY RIVERA: It allowed us to, you
14 know --

15 REPRESENTATIVE GROVE: Hire more people?

16 SECRETARY RIVERA: No, same.

17 REPRESENTATIVE GROVE: So same people,
18 you just shifted your cost to a bond instead of
19 paying it out of your GGO?

20 DIRECTOR MARIANO: It allows us some more
21 flexibility to pay for other expenses.

22 REPRESENTATIVE GROVE: What other
23 expenses?

24 DIRECTOR MARIANO: In general, in the
25 operation part of our GGO and personnel.

1 REPRESENTATIVE GROVE: So not -- so
2 you're paying for expenses even outside of the
3 PlanCon process?

4 DIRECTOR MARIANO: No. I'm saying that
5 by putting the cost of our staff onto the fee, which
6 we were granted through the legislature, the
7 legislature allowed us to do that legislation that
8 allowed us to do that and then we had to go before
9 the CFA and get that approval. That's the only way
10 we were allowed to have the fee in the first place.

11 And I'm saying that by having the funds
12 to transfer personnel costs off the GGO onto the
13 fee, that allows us more flexibility in our GGO
14 budget.

15 REPRESENTATIVE GROVE: Okay. Thank you.

16 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: Representative
17 Delozier.

18 REPRESENTATIVE DELOZIER: Thank you,
19 Mr. Chairman.

20 Secretary, question on early education.
21 So one of the things that we have, Pre-K Counts, we
22 have early intervention and we have Head Start, all
23 kind of encompassing before kindergarten here. My
24 one question that I noticed in the early childhood
25 education part with Pre-K Counts, asking for an

1 increase of \$30 million or a 17-percent increase.

2 One of the questions that I get within my
3 district, because I have Starred entities within
4 them, why are only 3 and 4 eligible for State
5 funding?

6 Why are not 2 and 3 levels a Stars
7 program?

8 Because they all have to comply with
9 State mandated requirements, as I get the
10 notifications if a daycare or anything like that is
11 complicit -- or compliant with the requirement.

12 So it's a celebration when they move up a
13 Star, but why are one and two not included in State
14 funding?

15 SECRETARY RIVERA: So the Stars Aligned
16 allocation is to ensure high quality --

17 REPRESENTATIVE DELOZIER: Absolutely.
18 The standards, correct, yeah.

19 SECRETARY RIVERA: So that's why we
20 incentivize it with additional funding by providing
21 more funding. The higher up the Star, you know, the
22 ladder you go, what I can share with you, in
23 addition to now looking at the quality of the
24 program, Star 3 and Star 4 will now look a little
25 more parallel as opposed to rungs on a ladder.

1 Currently, Star 3 is very operationally
2 driven. Star 4 is more quality of instruction
3 driven. We're actually going to allow those
4 allowances to kind of be flipped on its side. So a
5 high quality instructional program that doesn't meet
6 the same operational lens can hit that Star 3 rung
7 sooner.

8 REPRESENTATIVE DELOZIER: Just for that
9 part?

10 SECRETARY RIVERA: So just for that part,
11 just for 3 and 4.

12 REPRESENTATIVE DELOZIER: And they would
13 be entitled, then, to State funding appropriately.

14 SECRETARY RIVERA: So for example, yeah,
15 so you may have a Star 2 that's academically really
16 well aligned, but they don't have a CFO. So they
17 can't get that star 3 now, but what we're looking to
18 do by running them parallel, a high quality program
19 that doesn't necessarily have that staff person in
20 place can get the 3 rung.

21 REPRESENTATIVE DELOZIER: Okay. And I
22 have a number of questions, so I'm going to try and
23 rattle these off pretty quick. We have Pre-K Counts
24 and we have Head Start and we have Early
25 Intervention. Understanding that's the special ed

1 for before -- how many State dollars for these three
2 entities?

3 How many State dollars go to Pre-K
4 education here in Pennsylvania?

5 SECRETARY RIVERA: Sure. In '18-'19,
6 541.5 million in State funding for early childhood,
7 and that does not include Early Intervention. Early
8 Intervention is \$275.5 million.

9 REPRESENTATIVE DELOZIER: And that's
10 Federal?

11 SECRETARY RIVERA: That's our --

12 REPRESENTATIVE DELOZIER: Or those are
13 our State dollars?

14 SECRETARY RIVERA: State dollars.

15 REPRESENTATIVE DELOZIER: Okay. All
16 right. So \$550 million goes to early education.
17 When we have the four percent increase, the 11
18 million increase for early intervention services,
19 where will that money go?

20 SECRETARY RIVERA: So the early
21 intervention services will go right to the
22 intervention programs.

23 REPRESENTATIVE DELOZIER: So all of the
24 different programs?

25 SECRETARY RIVERA: To all of the

1 different programs. We have not changed the funding
2 system to look at use and look at allotment. That's
3 something that the system itself, the partners
4 within the system, are looking at.

5 REPRESENTATIVE DELOZIER: Will that take
6 into consideration more students that are presenting
7 with issues or services that are needed with dealing
8 with that in our early intervention?

9 SECRETARY RIVERA: Yes. It takes into
10 account more students in service. And I think this
11 is also a great opportunity to share.

12 We also look at the spring update, you
13 know, and if there's a need to adjust, we work, you
14 know, with the administration to adjust accordingly.

15 REPRESENTATIVE DELOZIER: For Head Start,
16 do we have a per capita number, per student, what it
17 costs the State?

18 SECRETARY RIVERA: That's what we're
19 looking to work towards. Right now, it's still, as
20 it historically has been, pots of funds that the
21 providers receive. And we're looking towards
22 working on a more aligned system in that --

23 REPRESENTATIVE DELOZIER: Okay. So with
24 the \$10 million increase for that, is that looking
25 to expand the amount of students or to add dollars

1 to the ones that are already being served?

2 SECRETARY RIVERA: Is that for early
3 intervention or --

4 REPRESENTATIVE DELOZIER: I'm sorry, for
5 the Head Start.

6 SECRETARY RIVERA: For Head Start, all of
7 that funding is looking -- is creating more slots
8 for students.

9 I also want to --

10 REPRESENTATIVE DELOZIER: Do you know how
11 many that will be?

12 SECRETARY RIVERA: Yep, I do.

13 So 4400 --

14 REPRESENTATIVE DELOZIER: With a \$10
15 million increase.

16 SECRETARY RIVERA: It's 4,400 additional
17 children to enroll in --

18 REPRESENTATIVE DELOZIER: I'm sorry, I
19 didn't hear the number.

20 SECRETARY RIVERA: So 4400 total; 3460 in
21 Pre-K and 930 in Head Start.

22 REPRESENTATIVE DELOZIER: Okay. And real
23 quick, kind of switching a little bit of gears here,
24 free and reduced breakfast and lunch, do we know how
25 many schools participate in that?

1 SECRETARY RIVERA: Matt is going to pull
2 that number up for --

3 REPRESENTATIVE DELOZIER: What is the
4 cost to Pennsylvania for that program?

5 SECRETARY RIVERA: The cost for free and
6 reduced lunch, I don't know. We have the State
7 share.

8 REPRESENTATIVE DELOZIER: The State
9 share, right. I recognize --

10 DIRECTOR MARIANO: Right. So for just
11 lunch, we can get you that number because it's not
12 just lunch. There are other food programs that are
13 funded through the school services line, for example
14 breakfast, and then also the child care, adult and
15 child care food programs, as well.

16 REPRESENTATIVE DELOZIER: All right. I'm
17 just trying to get the numbers as to how many, you
18 know, a Title I school, but also the free and
19 reduced lunch goes along with that. And one of my
20 schools is entirely served in that regard based on
21 the poverty level, so I'm just curious as to how
22 many of the schools in the State are in the same
23 boat.

24 DEPUTY DIRECTOR STEM: If you're talking
25 about the community eligibility provision, there are

1 181 LEAs participating in CEP, which captures 960
2 buildings and over 80 percent of the eligible sites
3 in Pennsylvania.

4 REPRESENTATIVE DELOZIER: 960 buildings.

5 DEPUTY SECRETARY STEM: Correct.

6 REPRESENTATIVE DELOZIER: So okay.

7 Because I -- okay. I'll have to do the math, then,
8 because I know how many buildings are in my
9 district, so that's --

10 DEPUTY SECRETARY STEM: I think we track
11 it vis-a-vis buildings because some schools earn
12 more than one building. So the 960 -- it may be a
13 few smaller if we --

14 REPRESENTATIVE DELOZIER: Is there a list
15 that possibly says what school district those are
16 in?

17 DEPUTY SECRETARY STEM: I think we can
18 track that down.

19 REPRESENTATIVE DELOZIER: To figure out
20 where they are. Okay.

21 Thank you very much.

22 SECRETARY RIVERA: Thank you.

23 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: Mr. Secretary,
24 will you forward to the Appropriations Committee all
25 of the Stars Program?

1 SECRETARY RIVERA: Yeah.

2 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: Would you send
3 that over to the Committee?

4 SECRETARY RIVERA: Yes. And the
5 reimbursement will absolutely -- yes, we'll
6 absolutely do that. That is per head driven, but I
7 misspoke --

8 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: Sure.

9 SECRETARY RIVERA: -- because I thought
10 she was sharing -- I thought it was an early
11 intervention question and it was an early childhood
12 question.

13 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: Yes, just the
14 Stars Program, if you would just send that over to
15 us, maybe even how many students are in each of the
16 programs, while you're at it.

17 All right. We'll move on to
18 Representative Helm.

19 REPRESENTATIVE HELM: Thank you,
20 Mr. Chairman.

21 I would like to talk a little bit about
22 charter schools. We already talked about them. I
23 would like to talk about reform.

24 Like is the administration still
25 interested in charter school reform?

1 And if so, can you explain what kind of
2 reforms you'd like to see?

3 SECRETARY RIVERA: So the administration
4 is absolutely still interested in engaging in
5 conversation around charter school reforms. I know
6 that, you know, the Governor and I have had a number
7 of conversations around charter schools, but I feel,
8 today and at this minute, I will definitely share
9 with you some of those that I've expressed concern
10 about.

11 First, I think there is an opportunity to
12 look at the charter school law. It's a relatively
13 old law, and we've learned a lot more about charter
14 schools.

15 You know, I do also think that we're more
16 and more accepting of the fact that charter schools
17 are public schools. And we have high performing
18 charter schools that would like to see some reform
19 in terms of the law, as well, but I'll share with
20 you some specifics.

21 Looking at special education costs, as
22 they're associated with charter schools, you know,
23 and ensuring that they're, you know, done in an
24 equitable manner, both in favor and support of all
25 institutions. I think we also have an opportunity

1 to look at the performance metrics of some charter
2 schools.

3 There are some really good, high
4 performing charter schools out there that are not
5 celebrated, you know, for the fact that they engage
6 students in good educationally meaningful ways. And
7 there are some charter schools that we find
8 difficulty in supporting school districts to
9 remediate and support.

10 And then, I think, also, lastly, you know
11 if there were ever an opportunity -- and of course,
12 this is the Secretary of Education speaking -- if
13 there were an opportunity to really revisit the full
14 charter school law, to look at it based on best
15 practice and how we want to support charter schools
16 to thrive and also hold poor performing charter
17 schools accountable, that's really the conversation
18 we should be having because there are good schools
19 out there, but they're lost in this narrative by us
20 in Harrisburg.

21 They're lost in the narrative around
22 school quality. So I do think there's an
23 opportunity to really revisit that opportunity from
24 A to Z.

25 REPRESENTATIVE HELM: I think I have some

1 good school districts, self-sufficient school
2 districts, but that's the one thing they bring up
3 constantly, is charter school reform. I know you
4 visited Halifax recently. They were very glad to
5 see you there. But when I visit that school, that's
6 the number one thing they talk to me about.

7 Let's talk about last year we had
8 hurricanes around here. Some schools had a real
9 influx of students. I know we had a large
10 population of students come from Puerto Rico. And I
11 just wonder what the Department is doing to assist
12 these schools, whether financially or just to help
13 the students, what you're doing.

14 SECRETARY RIVERA: Yes. So that
15 continues to be a work in progress for us. You're
16 correct. I mean, we've had a little over 3,000 U.S.
17 citizens migrate to the U.S. mainland from the U.S.
18 Virgin Islands, from Puerto Rico, Florida and Texas.

19 So we're hosting a little over 3,000
20 families now, a little over 3,000 families. So
21 first, we're looking -- we have our Office of School
22 Support looking at ways to hopefully leverage some
23 Federal dollars to provide some relief to school
24 districts who have been accepting students from
25 outside of the Commonwealth.

1 But I can also share with you, in
2 addition to funding, we've been working with the
3 U.S., with the Puerto Rico Department of Education,
4 to help engage them in a student records information
5 system and an employee records information system
6 setting, to at least make the transition as seamless
7 as possible for families who have been displaced
8 from their homes.

9 So we're working on the leverage of
10 Federal funding. We're working on student records
11 and some of the processes that create difficulty.
12 And I know that a number of the members of the
13 General Assembly have discussed interest in having a
14 deep conversation around how the State can best
15 support financially their local school districts.
16 And I will readily make myself available to engage
17 in that conversation.

18 I said 3,000 families -- it's 3000
19 students. I want to make sure that it's the right
20 number. Yeah.

21 REPRESENTATIVE HELM: So a lot of people
22 are interested in the new teacher evaluation. I
23 know we have new tools to evaluate teachers.

24 Could you just talk a little bit about
25 that, how that's working?

1 SECRETARY RIVERA: So we don't have a new
2 system to evaluate teachers yet. Act 82 is still
3 the system by which we evaluate teachers.

4 I know there have been a number of
5 conversations within the Education Committee, with
6 both the House and the Senate around, the need to
7 revisit. You know, I know, unfortunately, we had
8 gone a long way when the Chairman was Chair of the
9 Education Committee, but then he ran to another
10 Committee so we haven't had that conversation
11 lately, but it's absolutely a conversation we have
12 to have, around Act 82.

13 I think we know enough now that we can
14 definitely evolve to take educator evaluation to the
15 next level.

16 REPRESENTATIVE HELM: All right. Thank
17 you.

18 Thank you.

19 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: Representative
20 Roae.

21 REPRESENTATIVE ROAE: Thank you,
22 Mr. Chairman.

23 Mr. Secretary, good seeing you again.
24 I'm shifting gears a little bit here. Sometimes
25 when education is talked about, Governor Wolf makes

1 statements like, Pennsylvania ranks 45th in the
2 country for, you know, State funding for education.

3 You know, when you look at the numbers,
4 it doesn't really bear that out. When you look at
5 the per student State funding that comes, you know,
6 from the State, we're actually above average in the
7 whole country.

8 So I wonder, why does Governor Wolf say
9 we're 45th in the country, when we're actually in
10 the top half as far as, you know, State dollars per
11 student?

12 He says that we're 45th in the country.

13 SECRETARY RIVERA: You're right. When
14 you look at per student -- on average per student
15 funding, Pennsylvania is in the top quartile of the
16 amount of support.

17 REPRESENTATIVE ROAE: So he should say
18 we're in the top 25 percent.

19 SECRETARY RIVERA: There's a but in
20 there.

21 REPRESENTATIVE ROAE: Oh.

22 SECRETARY RIVERA: So we're in the top
23 quartile on average in terms of per student funding,
24 however, when you look at equity in terms of the
25 disparity between wealthy and poor school districts,

1 we're in the bottom quartile, significantly in the
2 bottom quartile.

3 When you think of -- just to give you an
4 example --

5 REPRESENTATIVE ROAE: Excuse me,
6 Mr. Secretary. Excuse me.

7 No, but that's not what he says. He
8 doesn't say we're 45th in, you know, fairness or
9 disparity. He says we're 45th in State funding.

10 SECRETARY RIVERA: So we're 45th in terms
11 of the amount of funding the State provides to local
12 school districts.

13 REPRESENTATIVE ROAE: Right.

14 SECRETARY RIVERA: Remember, we provide
15 significant local effort in relation to education
16 funding.

17 REPRESENTATIVE ROAE: But what the
18 numbers bear out, though, is that we're above the
19 national. There's like \$6,000 State dollars per
20 student in Pennsylvania. The national average is
21 like \$5,500 per student or something like that.

22 We're easily above the national average,
23 but he says we're 45th in State funding.

24 SECRETARY RIVERA: So when we've engaged
25 in the conversation, we've been pretty explicit of

1 the fact when you look at education funding across
2 the Commonwealth, we have a district that, you know,
3 when you look at the disparity, we have a district
4 that funds students at a little over \$25,000 per
5 student, and we have a district that's not too far
6 from us here that funds students at just over
7 \$10,000 per student.

8 So when we look at the disparity that the
9 Governor shares and that we have shared on record,
10 that's the issue that we tried to address, just the
11 funding gap that exists across the Commonwealth
12 because we've not looked at this issue of equitable
13 funding across the board as it relates to the --

14 REPRESENTATIVE ROAE: I'll get you the
15 articles. We don't have time to talk about it now,
16 but he's not talking about equity in the articles
17 I've seen. He's saying that Pennsylvania is 45th.

18 Now, my next question is, when you look
19 at the United States, the average, you know, revenue
20 per student, that's local, State and Federal funding
21 is about \$12,000 per student. Pennsylvania is about
22 \$16,000 per student.

23 And again, a lot of people, you know, the
24 Governor says, you know, we need to start investing
25 in education in Pennsylvania; Pennsylvania, you

1 know, is underfunding schools. You hear all kinds
2 of statements like that.

3 Well, if we're already at \$16,000 per
4 student, and the national average is \$12,000 per
5 student, it seems like we already are investing in
6 education.

7 SECRETARY RIVERA: I think the Governor
8 would agree with you now. We are now investing in
9 education. I think instead of saying start
10 investing, he would now say continue investing in
11 education.

12 The Governor and the General Assembly, in
13 the three years that I've been here, have made
14 significant investments in education. And for that,
15 I will go on the record to thank each and every one
16 of you and my boss for the continued advocacy. I
17 hope that we can continue to do so.

18 REPRESENTATIVE ROAE: Now, before the
19 Governor was elected, the combined budgets of the
20 500 Pennsylvania school districts were something
21 like, you know, \$26 billion. Now, they're, you
22 know, \$27 billion or something like that, so it's
23 not that much of an increase, but I guess my issue
24 is, a lot of people, they think that Pennsylvania is
25 the lowest in the country when it comes to education

1 funding.

2 When people hear the Governor say
3 Pennsylvania ranks 45th for State funding for
4 education, they just assume that Pennsylvania must
5 only be kicking in, you know, \$2,000 per year per
6 student, when it's really something like \$6,000 a
7 year per student. And when you look at what our
8 schools spend, if our school spent what the average
9 State is spending, you know, \$12,000 per student,
10 that's \$6,000 of State money against \$12,000 of per
11 student funding. That would be about 50 percent of
12 -- the State school district budgets would be
13 covered by State money.

14 But since we're spending an average of
15 \$16,000 per student, that \$6,000 of State funding
16 only works out to be about 39 percent of their
17 budget.

18 So is it the fault of the legislature
19 that Pennsylvania school boards vote to spend
20 \$16,000 a year on average rather than \$12,000? No
21 matter how high that number ever gets, it seems like
22 the Governor thinks that the State should pay 50
23 percent of the cost.

24 Well, what if the per student spending
25 goes up to \$17,000 or \$20,000 or \$25,000, should it

1 be expected that the State automatically pays 50
2 percent of it?

3 SECRETARY RIVERA: The Governor
4 absolutely advocates for the State to take a greater
5 share in funding education. So that, I absolutely
6 can concur. And I support his interpretation --

7 REPRESENTATIVE ROAE: No matter how much
8 they spend?

9 So if a school district spent \$30,000 a
10 year, the State should spent \$15,000 a year?

11 SECRETARY RIVERA: I don't think we're
12 going to get to a point where school districts are
13 spending \$30,000 a year or our school boards are
14 agreeing to, you know, support that type of
15 increase.

16 You know, I can share with you, over the
17 course of the past three years, especially as it
18 relates to educational funding, me being in the
19 position that I am in now, I have a perspective and
20 absolutely understand the difficulty this time of
21 the year.

22 We all face it. The General Assembly,
23 the administration, I as Secretary face it in asking
24 for more funding, which is why as shown in the
25 budget book, we've asked for some increases. In

1 other areas we've been forced to ask for carryover
2 budgets.

3 You know, it's interesting, and I'm
4 always careful, now, fully understanding how we make
5 these decisions locally and the fact of how it
6 impacts, how the members of the General Assembly
7 make decisions and how the Secretary has to
8 recommend the decisions. Then I go out to the
9 field.

10 And then I get to visit small, rural
11 school districts where they don't feel that they're
12 getting an equitable share, a fair share, you know,
13 and can make a case for why they need more funding
14 or I go, you know, to a poor urban school district,
15 then they can make a case locally as to why they
16 need more funding.

17 And I visit communities across the
18 Commonwealth and some are doing better than others.
19 And others are still trying, you know, to offset for
20 the many reductions they've been forced to make over
21 the course of the past, you know, the past years.

22 And the truth of the matter is, I
23 understand our perspective in Harrisburg and looking
24 at everything in aggregate. Also, I've learned, in
25 visiting hundreds of school districts, that locally

1 there are still some school districts that are in
2 need of additional support and funding.

3 And you know, we'll continue to advocate
4 on behalf of those and those families because
5 they've made a case. They've been open and honest
6 about what they need and, you know, I understand
7 that we have to continue to advocate for them.

8 REPRESENTATIVE ROAE: All right. I see
9 the time is up, but thank you, Mr. Secretary.

10 SECRETARY RIVERA: Thank you, sir.

11 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: Representative
12 Peifer.

13 REPRESENTATIVE PEIFER: Thank you,
14 Chairman.

15 Thank you, Secretary, for being here
16 today. I know a little before this afternoon you
17 were talking a little bit about school safety. When
18 I traveled down today, I know the topic of
19 conversation was the Florida school safety bill.

20 I think their school safety bill was over
21 \$400 million. And there were a number of
22 interesting pieces of that legislation. The one
23 piece, which I thought was interesting, was the
24 number of resource officers. I think there was one
25 resource officer per 1,000 students.

1 They talked about metal detectors. I was
2 just wondering, have you had a chance to look at
3 that information from Florida?

4 Are we going to do something similar?

5 Do you have any cost estimates of such a
6 plan for something here in the Commonwealth?

7 SECRETARY RIVERA: So I gave it a quick
8 glance in terms of what some of the highlight
9 recommendations were and, you know, many that you
10 just shared, Representative, so we've not started to
11 pull specifics around what it would cost to put a
12 school resource officer, metal detector equipment in
13 every school, but we have started to engage and
14 prepare ourselves to engage in a conversation around
15 the process.

16 And you know, one of the areas I would --
17 I would say caution, but one of the areas that I
18 would recommend is that we engage in conversation
19 first before we look to make significant investments
20 in school resource officers or police officers or
21 equipment, because there's a process you want to put
22 in place first to be able to do responsible
23 diligence in ascertaining the current landscape.

24 Secondly, you don't want to just be
25 reactive and put a system in place without fully

1 understanding the values of that community. And
2 lastly, there are also some other needs that school
3 districts have across the Commonwealth. And I do
4 think we absolutely can and should work to provide
5 more resources, you know, to school districts across
6 the Commonwealth as they relate to safety, but I
7 don't want just a bill to come out. I think we need
8 to have meaningful conversations with our
9 constituents and together, to do so in a meaningful
10 way.

11 REPRESENTATIVE PEIFER: You know, they
12 had some interesting ideas. And it's something that
13 we do on a normal basis. If there's a State or a
14 Commonwealth that's got a program or a procedure in
15 place, we go and look at what they've been doing.
16 So I think they've had some pretty good
17 conversation. And I think it would probably be
18 smart if we actually did the same.

19 I just, on a sidenote, the northeast, we
20 were just slammed by a nor'easter on Friday. So we
21 didn't have school again Friday. Many schools
22 didn't have power still. And schools that were open
23 are being used as shelters and it looks like there's
24 a storm also coming midweek.

25 So unfortunately, we may need some help

1 with a waiver for a number of those schools.

2 SECRETARY RIVERA: Absolutely.

3 REPRESENTATIVE PEIFER: But we're pretty
4 much maxed out. You know, we're on the phone
5 between our school districts trying to open up for
6 school days, and Emergency Management is saying,
7 look, let's keep the kids home and keep people off
8 the road and keep them safe.

9 SECRETARY RIVERA: We will work with them
10 to do that.

11 REPRESENTATIVE PEIFER: All right. Thank
12 you.

13 Thank you, Chairman.

14 SECRETARY RIVERA: Thank you.

15 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: I've agreed to
16 give Representative Kampf a very quick short
17 question.

18 REPRESENTATIVE KAMPF: Not an official
19 statement from my area school districts, but I have
20 heard from a couple of superintendents that in cases
21 where a young person, perhaps, needs some combined
22 inpatient and schooling, that maybe there's a lack
23 of such beds around the Commonwealth or in parts
24 that -- you're shaking your head. It looks like
25 you've maybe heard some of that.

1 Could you talk to us a little bit there?

2 SECRETARY RIVERA: Absolutely. We've
3 heard, in the area of mental health and in the area
4 of addiction, you know, there are so many growing
5 societal issues and concerns that we're trying our
6 best to support communities with. You know,
7 fortunately and unfortunately, schools, you know,
8 continue to and will continue to be the hubs, the
9 centers of all of our communities. Often it feels
10 like a burden. And I know in speaking to some
11 superintendents, you know, they're starting to feel
12 like we're spending more time on everything else
13 other than teaching and learning, and it's because
14 of the needs that continue to grow in our community,
15 and that's one of them.

16 We try our best to support them by, you
17 know, connecting them to the best practice around
18 community schools and community school models, so
19 that other professionals that focus in those areas
20 can come to our schools to provide those services,
21 but sometimes it's not immediate or even robust
22 enough to meet the needs of the local community.

23 And that's, you know, an area that we
24 will continue to have to sit down, discuss
25 resources, discuss programs, you know. What we'll

1 do is continue to identify best practice and point
2 them in the direction of what others are doing and
3 how it works well. But they're coming to you
4 because they need the resources and they need the
5 programs.

6 We were not equipped as an American
7 education system to deal with many of the
8 contemporary issues that we're dealing with today.
9 Lord knows what the issues of tomorrow are going to
10 be. I think that's why these types of conversations
11 are important. And that's why, you know, we'll
12 continue -- my team will continue to meet with the
13 staff of the General Assembly to inform, engage and
14 continue to support, you know, recommendations you
15 make to serve your local constituency.

16 I know the Governor is fully on board in
17 supporting the social and emotional needs of
18 communities and kids. You know, we'll do our best
19 to do good practice and make sure that we're not
20 wasting resources and utilizing them in the best
21 manner possible.

22 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: Representative
23 Quinn, did you ask for a quick question?

24 Did I hear that?

25 REPRESENTATIVE QUINN: You didn't hear

1 it; you just knew it.

2 Thank you.

3 Just as a follow-up, you just said,
4 Secretary, that we're just not equipped to be
5 dealing with many contemporary issues that are in
6 our schools. So first, I just want to say, please
7 extend to your teachers throughout, you know, how
8 grateful we are because we know that they are on the
9 front line, you know, with the families, but so
10 often they spend more time. But with recognizing
11 that, has there then been thought and changes to the
12 curriculum for teacher certification to bring this
13 in or is that the in-service days where they're
14 learning?

15 SECRETARY RIVERA: Great question.

16 And actually, it's one of the
17 conversations that's happening as we're looking to
18 improve the teacher pipeline. I mean, you've heard,
19 and it is true, the data shows that there's a
20 decrease in the number of folks seeking a first time
21 teaching certificate.

22 REPRESENTATIVE QUINN: They have to be
23 nurses and security guards and everything else.

24 SECRETARY RIVERA: Everything else. So
25 as we're looking at those pipeline issues, where one

1 of the recommendations we made under our Federal
2 plan is we want to move towards a full-year
3 residency program, so that teachers can get a full
4 year in the classroom under a master teacher before
5 becoming a first year teacher.

6 We're looking, you know, we're looking at
7 supporting teachers and dealing with the social and
8 emotional needs of students by better equipping
9 principals through principal professional
10 development.

11 We've put a significant focus on equity
12 and serving diverse communities for principal
13 training because they have to be better coaches now
14 than they've ever had to be before. And we've also
15 done the same with superintendents.

16 You know, not only are teachers having to
17 reimagine their profession. School leaders and
18 district leaders have to now reimagine how they are
19 leaders. It's no longer balancing the book and
20 checking boxes off of a list, you know, now you're a
21 confidante, you're a coach, you're an academic
22 advisor and the like.

23 And we've been developing new
24 professional development modules to address those
25 issues.

1 REPRESENTATIVE QUINN: Thank you very
2 much.

3 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: Mr. Secretary,
4 before we close out, your answers on the APSCUF
5 contract, please.

6 SECRETARY RIVERA: So we have answers on
7 the APSCUF contract. APSCUF's contract covers pay
8 and corresponding retirement, Social Security costs.
9 It's a \$19.7 million increase from the current year
10 to '18-'19, and that includes \$400,000 for
11 professional development. Cannot speak to '19-'20
12 costs because the contract sunsets in June of 2019.

13 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: So the current
14 contract expires --

15 SECRETARY RIVERA: In June.

16 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: So what was
17 the cost last year?

18 We asked for three years of costs.

19 SECRETARY RIVERA: Three years of costs.
20 So last year was the first year of the contract. So
21 we know from the current year, it's a \$19.7 million
22 increase. So they didn't give me the numbers, they
23 just gave me the increase from last year to this.

24 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: So this year
25 it was \$19 million going into this year's budget

1 that's coming up?

2 SECRETARY RIVERA: From this year to
3 '18-'19, it's a \$19.7 million increase. So current,
4 '17-'18 year, going into '18-'19 year was a \$19.7
5 million increase.

6 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: Okay. That
7 still goes to the point of managing the costs of
8 these contracts is driving up tuition. And like I
9 said, the reason Representative Briggs brought it up
10 earlier that his son or daughter -- and I don't
11 remember -- could go to a private institution
12 cheaper than you can go to a PASSHE -- and having
13 been one of those students who went to a PASSHE
14 school, the reason we created PASSHE was to allow
15 low-income families and middle class families to
16 have an opportunity to get a good quality education
17 at a reasonable cost.

18 And with contracts like these, we are
19 never going to get back to serving the people that
20 the school system was created for. And it's sad
21 because in my personal opinion, if we keep this up,
22 there will be no PASSHE in another year or two
23 because the State can't afford that.

24 We can't afford to have an institution
25 that isn't competitive with the private industry.

1 So my encouragement to the Board of Trustees, and to
2 the Governor, is to get a contract that makes sense
3 for Pennsylvania taxpayers and students, that
4 they're not bearing a burden and paying off a
5 student debt when they're 50 years old, because I
6 know some students out there who are, that are 50
7 today and still paying off their debt.

8 Now, they made some choices, maybe some
9 of those choices were bad, but our current students
10 there, there are several problems we have with our
11 students that are there. One, students are not
12 going to get a degree in four years at our State
13 System, and the debt coming out of there is more
14 than it is in private institutions in some cases.

15 So it's something that I, again, I know
16 you sit on the Board of Trustees. I asked you to
17 ask the Board of Trustees, and Chairwoman Shapiro,
18 as well, I've talked to her. Things have to change.

19 We have to change that system. We have
20 to save that system, but if we don't make radical
21 changes, there's no saving it. So the students of
22 this Commonwealth who are low income families and
23 middle class families and are not going to have
24 another option, other than going to public
25 universities and the system will have failed while

1 it was created by legislators and Governors many,
2 many years ago.

3 So my encouragement to you is to maybe in
4 some cases lecture if you have to, beat if you have
5 to, on the Board of Trustees to make significant
6 changes in that system, because otherwise we just
7 can't do it. This system cannot survive. We're
8 better off to let great universities like IUP and
9 West Chester and Bloomsburg -- and I could go on and
10 on -- become private institutions because they
11 probably can serve the students better than we're
12 serving them now. And that's a shame to say.

13 So with that, Chairman Markosek, you
14 probably have some comments.

15 MINORITY CHAIRMAN MARKOSEK: Yes.

16 Thank you, Chairman. Just a couple of
17 things.

18 First of all, I want to thank the
19 Secretary, Deputy Secretary, Madam Director, for
20 your testimony today. I thought you did very well,
21 a long day. You had a long day, as well. I'd be
22 remiss if I didn't mention your Deputy Secretary
23 Deb Reeves, who is here, who formerly worked on our
24 Appropriations staff. We miss her, but she's
25 serving the Commonwealth very well --

1 SECRETARY RIVERA: We like her.

2 MINORITY CHAIRMAN MARKOSEK: -- that's
3 what she tells me, anyway.

4 SECRETARY RIVERA: We like her.

5 MINORITY CHAIRMAN MARKOSEK: But
6 nevertheless, I did want to make a couple of
7 comments about some of the things that were said
8 here today. I know one of the members, just very
9 recently here in the questioning, you know, brought
10 up the advocacy of education in the Commonwealth.
11 You know, this is my eighth year as Chairman of the
12 Committee, so I've sat through a lot of hearings,
13 particularly the big one, obviously, every year is
14 education.

15 The one thing I would say, and just
16 looking around the General Assembly as a whole,
17 members of both sides of the aisle, from what I've
18 seen, for the most part, with some exceptions, are
19 very, very great advocates of education and more
20 funding for education, for public education and
21 higher education. Now, we can't always do that.
22 Sometimes we're limited by our resources. But, you
23 know, the fact -- the Governor is not the only one
24 who, you know, wants to make education better and
25 provide more funds for education. I would suggest

1 that most of the members of the General Assembly, by
2 a big margin, Senators and House members, are for
3 that, as well. So I think the Governor is right, in
4 a general sense, with that.

5 It was also brought up here about local
6 decisions that are made. We don't always agree with
7 those, certainly, but one of the other things
8 throughout my career here in the legislature that
9 I've heard over and over again is the sanctity of
10 local control of our schools, of our basic education
11 in elementary and secondary schools, how important
12 local control is.

13 Now, the local folks sitting on school
14 boards don't always make the right decision. We
15 understand that. And we are a budget committee,
16 after all, and we need to ask some tough questions
17 about funding and efficiencies, but I would suggest
18 to all of the members here, and I think, again, most
19 of the members of the General Assembly would agree,
20 that local control is something we want to keep here
21 in Pennsylvania. We want to help them do it better
22 and assist them, but I think that is not going to
23 change any time soon.

24 And I think, just to end, I think we
25 oftentimes -- and again, we're a budget committee

1 here, so it's our job to ask some tough questions
2 about how money is spent -- we get into the costs of
3 education. And there are many, many costs,
4 including labor agreements. They're all part of it,
5 as well.

6 But I think we always have to remember
7 when we're asking ourselves and looking at costs, we
8 also have to look at the value of what we're getting
9 for those costs. We oftentimes forget about the
10 value part of the equation.

11 Yes, everything costs money here. I
12 started out my questioning earlier, relative to
13 safety in the schools. Just here at the Capitol
14 Building, for example, since 9/11, that's 15, 16
15 years ago now, a huge additional cost to make the
16 Capitol Building safer.

17 Well, we're going to experience that with
18 our schools as well now, and we should, and we
19 should because there's a value to that. In that
20 case, and many cases, it's human life. We're never
21 going to have enough money to do everything we want.
22 And there will be times when we spend money that it
23 won't be all that efficiently spent, and we need to
24 question that. That's what this Committee is here
25 for.

1 It's not just education; it's all the
2 things that we do with State government. Yes, we
3 have to look at the costs, but we also have to look
4 at the value of what we're spending that money on.
5 That's part of the equation.

6 We have to make that balance. So I would
7 just, again, say thank you. I think you answered
8 the questions very, very well today. I'm sure
9 you'll get back to us some additional information
10 that we're looking forward to seeing, but I really
11 would like to give you a lot of credit for spending
12 a long day with us today.

13 We'll look forward to working with you
14 and, as I think most of the members of the General
15 Assembly want to do, provide more resources for
16 better education in Pennsylvania.

17 Thank you.

18 SECRETARY RIVERA: Thank you, sir.

19 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: Secretary, I
20 also want to thank you. It's been a long day for
21 you, some tough questions.

22 As Representative Markosek had mentioned,
23 one of the concerns that I think members have here
24 anymore, and it's always been, it's not just today,
25 but more now than ever, the question comes about

1 transparency. Accountability is a big question
2 today for everybody, as we all know.

3 So that comes to tough questions because
4 members need to know where every dollar is spent and
5 how they can go back to the taxpayers, particularly
6 when you're raising fees or raising taxes, people
7 want to know, if you're raising my taxes or you're
8 raising fees, what problem are you solving?

9 Are you solving school safety? Are you
10 solving the college tuition issue?

11 Those are the kinds of things that
12 members are getting hit on. And I will tell you
13 that in my years here, the questions are tougher
14 today than they were when I first came here, because
15 people are more knowledgeable. The taxpayers have
16 more information at their fingertips and are
17 questioning politicians and bureaucrats, as well,
18 about how we're spending dollars, which is a good
19 thing, more accountability.

20 But that's why you took probably a little
21 bit of a beating today, but like I said, it's not
22 meant directly at you. It's meant to get the answer
23 and to educate us as to what we in the General
24 Assembly also have a responsibility to do. And we
25 may have disagreements with the administration or

1 with you. You and I have had many, many
2 conversations when I was Chairman of the Education
3 Committee, as well, but it is one of those things.

4 I think Chairman Markosek is exactly
5 right. I don't know if I know any member of the
6 General Assembly who doesn't care about education.
7 It's probably the one thing that we all agree on.
8 We may have differences on how it should be spent in
9 some cases, but it is something we all agree on.

10 So again, thank you very much for your
11 dedication to our Commonwealth and to our children.
12 With that, we will adjourn this hearing and
13 reconvene tomorrow at 10:00 a.m. with the Department
14 of Health and Human Services.

15 Mr. Secretary.

16 SECRETARY RIVERA: Can I just share a
17 quick word, two quick words?

18 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: Sure.

19 SECRETARY RIVERA: First, I have to take
20 a moment and thank my team for doing an amazing job
21 serving the Department over the course of the year,
22 but preparing us with the testimony and all of the
23 information shared today. So thank you to an
24 amazing group of folks.

25 I also want to take a moment, if I can,

1 to thank the Chairman, last Appropriations hearing
2 together. Thank you for all of your service to the
3 Commonwealth. I really appreciate you being who you
4 are and supporting us. And thank you for taking an
5 active role in helping prepare us. We like the
6 beating because it shows that at least you're paying
7 attention and you know that we're here and education
8 is important, so you know, continue to push us and
9 we're going to continue to serve the children of the
10 Commonwealth, so thank you.

11 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: Do you want to
12 recognize your Executive Deputy Secretary who is
13 sitting behind you, as well?

14 SECRETARY RIVERA: The coats or David?

15 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: All of them.
16 You can recognize all of them.

17 SECRETARY RIVERA: We have an amazing
18 team. And as you saw here today, you know, they
19 come in and they're committed. Even, I think, we
20 had a meeting on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day,
21 just to make sure information was available.
22 They're committed, and I'm lucky to have them on my
23 team.

24 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: I didn't want
25 any of them to feel neglected since Joe introduced

1 one. I didn't want the rest of them to feel that
2 they were not being paid attention to.

3 SECRETARY RIVERA: That was special.
4 That was special.

5 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: With that,
6 this hearing is adjourned until tomorrow at 10:00
7 a.m.

8 (Whereupon, the hearing concluded.)

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CERTIFICATE

I hereby certify that the proceedings are contained fully and accurately in the notes taken by me on the within proceedings and that this is a correct transcript of the same.

Tracy L. Markle,
Court Reporter/Notary