



State Representative **MIKE JONES**

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Dear Neighbor:

The General Assembly approved, and the governor signed into law, a state budget for the 2024-25 fiscal year. I voted “no” on the plan because it will spend \$47.6 billion, a \$2.7 billion, or 6% increase, over the prior fiscal year.

While the new spending rate is about \$740 million less than what Gov. Josh Shapiro sought when he unveiled his budget proposal in February, it is well above the maximum that would be allowed if Pennsylvania had a spending cap in place. I co-sponsored **House Bill 786**, known as the Taxpayer Protection Act, which would cap spending based on the Consumer Price Index (CPI) multiplied by population growth. The 6% increase exceeds that limit. Furthermore, while the budget provides significant funding increases for our schools and other important initiatives, it will spend about \$3.3 billion more than the Commonwealth is anticipated to collect in revenue over the coming fiscal year. In fact, it will dip into reserve funds, which is not a sustainable long-term strategy. To learn more about the state budget, visit PAHouseGOP.com/budget2024.

Finally, if you are not currently receiving my weekly email updates, please visit RepMikeJones.com and sign up. Thank you for the privilege of serving you!

Sincerely,



Rep. Mike Jones

REMOVING BARRIERS TO CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION

When it comes to education, I am focused on the best ways of preparing our young people for the in-demand jobs of today and tomorrow. For many, that means college, for others the military, and for some, immediate entry into the workforce. While I certainly advocate for college, we are spending too many taxpayer dollars to send too many students to traditional colleges and universities.

Why do I say that? Because, at the last check, about 45% of those who opted for a four-year degree had no degree at all after six years. Numerous others got a degree but never got a job in their field of study. Meanwhile, we have shortages of much-needed trades and other career and technical graduates.

Manufacturing underpins our way of life in York County. About 20% of our jobs, and many of our best-paying jobs, come from manufacturing. That is double the state average. If those manufacturers can't find welders, machinists and mechanics, they, along with our children and grandchildren, will go elsewhere. Additionally, as our citizenry ages (Pennsylvania has the sixth oldest population in the nation), we will need carpenters, plumbers, and electricians to build and maintain our homes and infrastructure, not to mention desperately needed health care and medical workers.

In York County and across the Commonwealth, we have many students who are interested in career and technical education (CTE). But while we have excess capacity at the college level, demand for these programs often exceeds the number of slots available in our schools. Such is the case at York County School of Technology (York Tech), a true York County gem and the highest rated CTE high school in the state. While York Tech accepts 470-500 students annually, 650-700 are turned away! I want to find creative ways to accommodate these students and have some ideas to pursue with our local school districts this year.

Pennsylvania has more than 80 career and technical centers and additional high school-based programs that focus on vocational training in high-demand job fields. Rising interest in CTE over the past decade has led to enrollments of more than 68,000 students. Yet, thousands more continue to be turned away. Workforce development is essential to our economy.

Therefore, we simply must do everything we can to ensure all students have access to these programs. That is why I supported **House Resolution 481**, which calls on the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee to conduct a study to determine why students are encountering non-academic barriers when attempting to get into CTE programs and how to remove them. I believe the findings of this study will lead to change that will mean a brighter future for the young people of Pennsylvania.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

Dignity for incarcerated women, where I led the charge the last five years, became law at the beginning of this legislative session. I worked across the aisle with my Democrat colleague Morgan Cephas from Philadelphia to get **House Bill 900**, now **Act 47 of 2023**, into law. The bill passed both the House and Senate unanimously. Prisons were not designed with women in mind and this bill addresses many of these issues, such as the need to provide feminine hygiene products, ensuring male guards are not in the presence of a woman in a state of undress, and extending certain commonsense protections to pregnant women. It also seeks to protect innocent children and unborn babies for those inmates who are mothers and/or pregnant. While these women have committed crimes and justice must be served, they are still our mothers, sisters, and daughters. By treating them with dignity we ultimately reduce recidivism, keep families together, and work to break the cycle of crime.

Legislation I am sponsoring to classify county correctional vehicles as emergency vehicles is pending in the House Transportation Committee. Currently, only those vehicles owned by a county correctional institution in Philadelphia

are given such status. **House Bill 1561** would extend that privilege to all county-owned correctional vehicles, regardless of municipality type. The vehicles would be limited to using red lights and sirens only when responding to an emergency at a prison or when escorting a prisoner in an ambulance. In addition to emergency response, this bill is needed to ensure that escort vehicles, which provide security to surrounding communities, are not separated from the prisoner/ambulance they are escorting.

House Bill 1745 aims to address student loan debt, which currently stands at \$1.77 trillion. While I am not a big fan of tax credits (I prefer we lower taxes and reduce regulations for all citizens and businesses), I voted for the bill, which was included in the recently signed Tax Code Bill, because it helps address student debt by establishing tax credits for employers who contribute to employees' PA 529 College and Career Savings Program accounts. Generous employers can now claim a state tax credit while reducing the financial burden on Pennsylvania students and families.

State Representative **MIKE JONES**

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AROUND THE 93RD LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT



Celebrating the grand opening of K&M Home Center in Loganville with owner Nick Bair



Lt. Col. Joseph Innerst honored at Dallastown High School



37th Annual York Co. Agricultural Recognition Banquet



"Hats Up" at Dallastown Area High School graduation



With Senator Kristin Phillips-Hill at Dallastown parade



Document shredding event in Shrewsbury

VOTER ID EFFORTS STALLED

With just a handful of days remaining in this legislative session, passage of legislation to require voter identification appears doubtful. In late March, House Republicans moved to force a vote on **House Bill 891**, which would amend the state Constitution to require voters to present an accepted form of identification at the polls. The measure failed to gain the required signatures. Unless Democrat leaders, who control the voting calendar, choose to move the bill this fall, our efforts to amend the Constitution will fail and we will be forced to start the process over in the new legislative session. To amend the Constitution, identical bills must be approved in two consecutive legislative sessions before being presented to the voters as a referendum. Nearly three-quarters of Pennsylvania voters, regardless of party affiliation, support voter ID.