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DEMOCRAT FOR GOVERNOR







- The Education System Delaware Deserves
- Controlling the Cost of Living
- The Climate Solutions Delaware Needs
- Focus on Sussex
- A Safe & Just Society
- Making Government Work Better

Real Plans • Real People • Real Progress



Matt Meyer unveils the most extensive education policy in the history of gubernatorial campaigns, earning accolades from Delaware educators

WITN22, April 2024

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THE EDUCATION SYSTEM DELAWARE DESERVES

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After my service in Iraq, I returned home—both to Delaware and to teaching. I began by teaching fifth- and sixth-grade math at Prestige Academy. Prestige was a public middle school in Wilmington, created to prepare underserved students to excel in the most demanding college preparatory high schools.

My sixth graders thrived. I went a little outside the curriculum, creating $100 stock portfolios for each student to trade and introducing scholars to code using free online software like Scratch and code.org. For those who struggled, I turned to rap and poetry, using a few hip-hop songs from Flocabulary and others to teach everything from times tables to fraction division.

Then on a Wednesday afternoon, Dr. Perry and Ms. Davisson called me into their office. They wanted me to continue teaching sixth grade and add a seventh-grade class, BCU 7.

No one wanted to teach BCU 7. And they knew it.

No one except for me.

In a school with strict discipline and a creative approach to engaging Black and brown students who struggled to succeed in other settings, this class was emblematic of the struggling 21st-century urban classroom. Few students were engaged in lessons. BCU 7 students' English and math test scores placed most of them at the elementary school level, not seventh grade.

I was given a seventh-grade mid-year assessment quiz to give the students. Instead, I gave them a fourth-grade math assessment, an easy quiz to start. This was not about low expectations; rather, it was about building confidence and making sure all the students understood the basics.

Nearly every BCU 7 student aced that fourth-grade math assessment. That evening, I reached out to each of their families. When I told one parent that her son had earned a perfect score on the quiz, she started started sobbing. A teacher had never called her with good news before.

We were off and running. We moved quickly from the fourth-grade level to the fifth-grade level, and then to the sixth- and seventh-grade curriculums. We identified longstanding gaps in our students' understandings and we worked surgically, together—often with the families and always with our paraprofessionals—to fix things.

Teaching has always been less about talking and more about doing; less about planning and more about detailed execution; less about perfection and more about honest self-assessment, correcting missteps and moving forward. That's how we worked with BCU 7 over those last few months of the school year.

And that's how we're going to address an education system that is ranked 46th nationally, with a majority of students unable to achieve state standards in English or math.

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The Meyer Record

- Matt Meyer taught middle school math at Prestige Academy, a public school in Wilmington.
- As County Executive, Matt created the 1000 Kids Coding initiative in partnership with Code Differently to give low-income students high-income skills during Summer and Year-Round Youth Employment Programs.
- In partnership with Donors Choose, Matt developed a program that provided over 1,300 Delaware teachers with funding to innovate in their classrooms—a program that was replicated in over 100,000 classrooms across nine states.[1]
- Matt created a civics class in two Delaware high schools to teach students how to engage in their communities to improve public safety, libraries, parks and local governance.[2]
- Matt created an annual New Castle County Government scholarship program that has provided college scholarships to hundreds of Delaware students.[3]
- Matt secured the most comprehensive early childhood investment in New Castle County Government history, providing home-visiting nurses to first-time expectant mothers in partnership with Children and Families First.[4]
- Matt invested in the building and operations of four new school-based wellness centers to support elementary students most impacted by the pandemic.[5]

SCHOOL FUNDING
We must fully fund our public schools.



The evaluation of Delaware's public school funding system by the American Institute for Research (AIR) paints a vivid picture of the educational challenges our state faces. Since the early 2010s, Delaware has consistently fallen behind in math and reading proficiency at both the fourth- and eighth-grade levels compared to our neighboring Mid-Atlantic states such as Virginia, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Maryland. Moreover, Delaware grapples with the lowest neighborhood income levels and highest percentages of English Language Learners (ELLs) and students living in poverty compared to these neighboring states. And after Pennsylvania, Delaware has the second-highest percentage of students with disabilities.

The equity analysis conducted by AIR, comparing four student measures, revealed that although Delaware currently directs more funds to schools with higher percentages of low-income students, Students With Disabilities (SWDs), and English Language Learners (ELLs), these additional resources are insufficient to adequately meet their needs. A notable negative correlation exists between a school's student outcomes and the proportion of low-income students it serves, indicating a lack of equitable opportunities for academic success among this demographic. This underscores the importance of allocating more resources to schools with higher levels of need. Furthermore, Opportunity Funding, even when fully funded, would only amount to an average of $974 per low-income or ELL student. The AIR's analyses suggest that funding for low-income students should be approximately ten times higher to adequately address their needs.[6]

To rectify these disparities, we must invest more in Delaware's public education system and distribute resources more equitably, according to student need, to support low-income students, students with disabilities, and English Language Learners. The current funding system, known as unit count, is archaic, established in the 1940s. We will fund English Language Learners and low-income students more equitably.

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This is not just about doing obscure budget math. This is a moral imperative. Educational opportunity is the great equalizer in American society. Our current school funding system makes the American dream impractical for too many Delawareans by the third grade. Opportunity Funding introduced in 2019 seeks to address student needs and is a step forward, providing an additional $974 per student on average. The Opportunity Fund's year-by-year grant and funding inflexibility makes it hard for districts to conduct long-term planning. As Governor, I will:

- **Increase investment in Delaware's public education system with urgency, consistent with the AIR study.** Funding cannot change overnight but must increase with urgency. Educational equity is fundamental to an equal and just society.
- **Better align our state's funding system with the AIR report's recommendation of an additional increase of $3,400 to $6,400 per pupil.** Several states have either exceeded or met these funding benchmarks. We commit not only to increase funding but also to allocate resources based on a 2025 formula using 21st-century values, allocating resources from the state tailored to student needs, especially for low-income students, those with disabilities, and English Learners.
- **Create greater transparency.** The existing system comprises multiple formulas, each distributing different staffing positions or funding allocations primarily through a unit system that is hard to convert into dollars of funding. I will implement a weighted funding formula based on dollars instead of positions, in order to provide greater funding transparency to all Delawareans, including policymakers, school administrators, teachers, and families.
- **Address local capacity and tackle tax inequity.** The state's effective tax rates vary substantially amongst school districts, with some shouldering tax rates almost four times higher than others. A formula considering both state and local revenue, generating target funding levels for each district or school, will contribute to balancing local capacity. This will ensure fair funding levels, accounting for both state and local revenue variations, ultimately fostering educational equity across the state.
- **Increase school impact fees for new development.** The state charges fees on new residential developments that enable the local school district to accommodate the resulting increased student population. Because such fees are insufficient, districts in our state with rapid population growth more frequently hold referenda. Existing residents in Appoquinimink and Cape Henlopen Districts subsidize the developers' additional burden on local schools. The impact fee calculation for new developments must be recalculated to more accurately capture the true cost of additional population in our communities, with respect to schools and all other infrastructure as well.

TEACHING

I believe systems are only as good as the people working within them.

When many employees seek to leave, it is nearly impossible to achieve the desired team goals. When employees are well compensated and supported well, with the right leadership, the team will excel. Our teacher and paraprofessional compensation should be among the best. The working environment—the classroom and school atmosphere—should be conducive to learning. It should be a place where educators want to work and want to stay.

Delaware is experiencing a teacher shortage, and it's only getting worse.

This is reflected, among other things, in our ability to keep class sizes small. At all levels of K-12 education, Delaware consistently maintains class sizes below the national average in self-contained classes, but our classes taught in departmentalized instruction (in other words, when students have teachers for specialized subjects like music or chemistry) have sizes far above the national average. Last year, one-third of school districts in our state failed to meet the limit of 22 students per classroom.

The greater the students' needs, the smaller the class size should be. To do this, we need more teachers. And we need to both attract and retain the best. But we can't do that when we pay teachers less than other professionals with comparable levels of education. Fewer and fewer young people are choosing to enter the teaching profession, even fewer choose to teach in Delaware, and even fewer of those are people of color. **We need a Teacher-Governor to remedy this.**

Our average starting salary for teachers is $45,448, lower than all three of our neighboring states, with New Jersey teacher salaries roughly 20% higher. In Maryland, the starting salary is $48,510, but is slated to rise to a minimum of $60,000 by July 1, 2026. The Delaware Public Education Compensation Committee, with the current Administration's support, has proposed matching Maryland's increases so the starting salary in Delaware will be $60,000 by 2026. This is an important step, but we need to do more. As Governor, I will:

- **Advocate for Delaware teacher salaries to surpass that in surrounding states by the end of my first term.** Other states should be chasing us on salary, not vice-versa.
- **Advocate for Delaware paraprofessionals to receive significant increases in compensation.** It is hard to see our classrooms thriving when paraprofessionals play such an important role in teaching, learning, and classroom environments, and they are paid a fraction of what Amazon delivery drivers make.

Of course, if we want to improve teaching, it's not enough to simply increase educator compensation. We also need to improve the school environment, the safety and security of students and adults, and also facilitate environments conducive to learning. Furthermore, we must make sure educators are receiving the ongoing training and education they need to keep up with developments in their field, obtain new skills and expertise and advance as teachers. As Governor, I will:

- **Provide supports to reduce classroom disruptions.** For many of my teacher colleagues, all they really want each day is a supportive environment to deliver the magic of classroom instruction. When increased numbers of students come to school with academic, emotional, behavioral, and mental health challenges, the entire classroom environment is impacted. Most teachers are trained to teach, not to provide mental health support or stock food pantries. We will work with districts and schools to develop programs to provide supportive and nurturing environments to students facing challenges while enabling educators to do what they do best: teach.
- **Work to expand the quality and quantity of professional development available to our teachers** and to reward teachers who achieve higher levels of qualification and performance. Qualities of successful professional development programs include actively engaging participants, incorporating modeling and demonstration, providing support during incorporation, and encouraging collaborative participation.
- **Promote high-retention, supportive pathways into teaching** by underwriting the cost of teacher preparation through service scholarships and loan forgiveness in exchange for a commitment to teaching in high-need schools or subject areas, typically for at least four years.
- **Fund teacher residencies,** partnerships between districts and universities that subsidize and improve teachers' training, which will help move teachers into high-need schools and in critical-need subject areas.
- **Provide educators already in classrooms with loan forgiveness programs.**
- **Provide additional opportunities for teachers to earn higher pay by increasing their own value,** by earning advanced teaching credentials, by taking on more challenging assignments like going voluntarily to schools with historically underserved students, and by becoming Master Teachers, who put additional time into mentoring and assisting teachers who are new or in need of guidance.
- **Propose raising the pay of high-performing teachers in needed schools, areas, and specialties to $100,000 per year.**

We also must increase the diversity of our teaching workforce. Research has established that a workforce that better reflects student composition, and specifically more teachers of color, leads to better student outcomes.[9] As Rodel reports, while 56 percent of our students identify as students of color, only 17 percent of our teachers were people of color as of 2020, and we were losing the vast majority of these individuals to other states after only two years.[10] Rodel has been working with schools and others throughout our state to double the percentage of our teaching workforce who identify as people of color; this is commendable, but it is only a start. As Governor, I will:

- **Work to ensure that, by the end of my term, the diversity of our teaching force roughly approximates the diversity of our student population.** This is something we nearly have achieved in County government. By establishing a culture of inclusivity and hiring panels that always include persons of color, we have nearly doubled the number of employees of color in New Castle County government.
- **Include teachers of color in the hiring process in meaningful ways,** including creating diverse hiring committees or compensating teachers for attending recruitment fairs.
- **Offer support through programs once teachers of color are hired,** such as mentorship, seminars, classroom assistance, time to collaborate with other teachers, coaching and feedback from experienced teachers, and reduced workloads. We understand that recruiting and hiring diverse groups of educators is not enough. We will have comprehensive retention strategies particularly focused on enhancing diversity among our educators.
- **Hire earlier in the year, which can assist with recruitment.** Research suggests that more in-demand candidates of color may be available for hire earlier in the year. Districts can offer incentives for teachers to announce their resignation, retirement, and transfer intentions in early spring so that they can recruit new hires earlier in the season. Districts also can partner with local educator preparation programs, including those at Historically Black Colleges and Universities, to coordinate student teaching placements and vet candidates for hire before they graduate.

EARLY CHILDHOOD

A few months ago, days after my son Levi was born, a pediatrician friend of mine told me that the next five years were the most important five years of his life. Half of all of Levi's brain development in his entire life would occur in his first year of life. Ninety percent of brain development happens by a child's fifth birthday. Much of what matters most happens before a child ever sets foot in a Delaware school. Free public education usually starts sometime around the fifth birthday. For too many Delaware children, this is too late.

The foundation for academic success must begin with high-quality early education that is accessible, affordable, and supportive for families. For too long, early childhood education has been seen as too expensive, and early childhood educators have been grossly underpaid.

Funding early childhood programs appropriately is not an expense. It is the best investment we can make in our collective future.

We will work to address Delaware's inadequate investment in early educational resources, which currently invests four times less in children aged three to five and 10 times less in children aged zero to two compared to those in K–12 grades.[11] The state's mandate to fund preschool education is also limited to students with disabilities, resulting in varying availability of public preschool programs by district. Some districts offer preschool for 3-to-5-year-olds regardless of ability, while others restrict it to students with disabilities or those from a low-income family.[12]

Studies underscore the long-term benefits of investing in high-quality early education for both the child and the family. These advantages include a reduced risk of substance abuse, a higher likelihood of college attendance and full-time employment as adults, and stronger parent-child relationships. A University of Chicago study indicates that early childhood investments can yield up to a 13 percent-per-year return on investment.[13] This investment not only aids families in accessing childcare and early childhood programming but also enhances their participation in the labor force, contributing to increased earnings, particularly benefiting mothers who can enter the workforce, pursue further education, and boost their overall income.[14]

Having worked as a teacher, I've witnessed how high-quality education can shape a student's trajectory. My personal experience is that in high-violence neighborhoods that have been struggling for decades, we need to start earlier than age five if we are serious about neighborhood transformation.

We will transform zero-to-five education, especially for kids raised in poverty, by replicating throughout Delaware models like the Harlem Children's Zone.

These are expensive per-child investments. As Governor, I will look to fund pilot programs to provide comprehensive zero-to-five education, providing higher quality early childhood services to more children than at any other time in our state's history. We will collaborate with the foundation and non-profit communities to invest in multiple pilots, and then we will work to scale up models that work.

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, childcare costs should not exceed 10 percent of a family's income. In Delaware, single parents pay 35.8 percent of their income for infant center care.[15] This amounts to the yearly cost of tuition at a four-year college. With 76,000 children living in single-parent homes in Delaware, it's imperative to support both children and families in accessing affordable, high-quality childcare.[16]

As Governor, I will:

Provide universal access to pre-K throughout the state by the end of my first term.
This will ensure that every child in Delaware starts their education on a path to success from the very beginning, with early exposure to active, playful learning.

Expand home visiting nursing programs to every first-time expectant mother in poverty in Delaware, starting in pregnancy through the child's second birthday.

Make affordable, high-quality childcare and early childhood education accessible to all parents.
At present, 47% of the state's population under five live in Sussex and Kent County, while only 38% of programs are available in these counties.[17] Families in rural areas also face longer commutes to access services. We need to enhance access to diverse, local, high-quality education centers for families.

Prioritize the growth and support of professional development opportunities for those working with children in early childhood settings. The childcare industry holds significant economic weight in Delaware, with a total economic impact of $320 million and approximately 6,700 employees. However, three-quarters of early learning professionals in Delaware earn $10-11 per hour, making them eligible for public benefits with a family of three.[18] I will ensure that we recognize the value of the work undertaken by early childhood education professionals by providing wage increases, job training opportunities, degree completion funding, and accessible mental health support.

Redefining Delaware's approach to early childhood education is not just a matter of policy, but a commitment to the holistic well-being of our children and families. By addressing the current resource allocation disparities and expanding access to high-quality early education, we not only enrich the lives of our children today but also lay the groundwork for a thriving and resilient Delaware in the years to come.

PRIMARY & SECONDARY EDUCATION

Delaware's school system is in dire need of improvement.



Standardized test scores from 2023 showed that 60% of fourth graders lack proficiency in reading, highlighting a pressing need for comprehensive intervention.[19] This concern extends all the way to the later stages of the K-12 pipeline, as well, where SAT scores from 2023 indicate that only 44% of students meet or exceed grade-level expectations in reading and writing, and only 23% achieve the same in math.[20]

Data from 2021-2022 showed that 12% of high school students do not graduate on time, with even higher rates for students of color, low-income students, students with disabilities, and English Language Learners, emphasizing the urgency to equip all children with essential skills and opportunities for future success.[21]

EdWeek's Quality Counts report card found in 2021 that Delaware ranked 19th among the 50 states and the District of Columbia overall, with a grade of C-plus. But on its "K-12 Achievement Index" (which examines 18 distinct achievement measures related to reading and math performance, high school graduation rates, the results of Advanced Placement exams, poverty-based gaps, and progress in closing those gaps), we finished 39th with a grade of only D-plus. In terms of current performance, we ranked 34th in the nation with a C-minus—but we were rated as heading in the wrong direction with a D-minus and ranked 45th.[22]

These numbers have only gotten worse since the pandemic.

In short, there are many extraordinary district leaders, school leaders and educators working many overtime hours across our state. But the outcomes are not what they should be. It is our failure, a failure of leadership, that I will seek to address as Governor.

As Governor, I will:

Promote school-based management.
I have never seen a great school with a bad principal or a bad school with a great principal. We need to bring school governance closer to students and families. That starts with empowering principals over centralized control from Dover or school district central offices. We must give principals more authority to lead and hold those principals accountable, and we must give teachers more control over what they teach in their own classrooms. High-quality school principals have been shown directly to impact student and teacher success.[23]

Great principals create strong and inclusive learning environments, fostering a climate of exploration, encouraging staff to assume leadership roles, and making data-informed decisions. Successful principals attract and retain highly effective teachers, organize schools to support the whole child, and lead and support deeper learning instruction.

Teachers should be treated like the professionals they are and empowered to use their knowledge of education techniques: studies show that teachers are more effective and impactful in teaching curriculums they shaped themselves, rather than following strictly regulated curriculums. That's why I will support the expansion of school-based management and encourage our central school district administrations to provide the kinds of professional development both teachers and principals need and want, as well as the supportive services like HR, procurement, transportation and testing that work better at scale—letting teachers teach and principals lead.

Protect parental rights.
That means respecting parental control regarding their own children, but standing firm against attempts by parents and outside groups to control what other families' children may learn or read.

Encourage innovation in education.
I will create an education innovation fund for schools or districts looking to develop new and diverse programs that help improve educational opportunities and outcomes.

Focus on the whole child.
How can children learn when they are hungry, unhealthy, or do not have a safe place to lay their heads at night?

Delaware has the highest average lunch debt per child in the country, over $188 per child. That's more than $6.2 million in total school meal debt in our state. Students are ostracized in the cafeteria and prohibited from attending school functions, like homecoming. That is unacceptable. I will fully fund school lunch and breakfast programs for all public school children who need them, ending school meal debt in our state once and for all. Further, we will enhance collaboration with programs like Healthy Foods for Healthy Kids so students can have the learning opportunity of eating food that they plant and grow.

"Community schools" provide an integrated focus on academics, health and social services, youth and community development, along with community engagement programs that lead to improved student learning, stronger families, and healthier communities overall. Community schools are centers of the community, open to everyone—all day, every day and on evenings and weekends. Using public schools as a hub, community schools bring together a wide variety of partners to offer a range of services and opportunities to children, youth, families, and others. Evaluations of 20 initiatives nationwide confirm that community schools improve student learning, family involvement, safety and security, and greater utilization of schools and other public services and facilities. The Community in Schools program currently serves more than 3,000 students in the Red Clay, Christina, Brandywine, and Colonial School Districts. Supporting families is integral to children's success, necessitating targeted strategies for community engagement and outreach, addressing factors like food insecurity that disproportionately affect marginalized groups. As Governor, I will expand community schools statewide and will champion collaboration between community organizations and schools.

Double the current Administration's budget of about $5.4 million to maintain existing school-based health center facilities, not just to support existing centers in high schools but also to build and operate more such centers in elementary and middle schools, as we started to do in New Castle County.

Ensure that all Delaware children read at grade level by third grade. Third-grade reading levels are particularly important because children who can't read well by that grade are four times more likely to drop out of school than their peers who can read proficiently.

The Seaford School District is the only high-poverty district in Delaware where, in 2022, students finished their third grade year performing above standards on the Smarter Balanced exam and then, as fourth graders in 2023, grew more than a full academic year. How did they do it? By following the science of reading and creating consistency across all aspects of teaching and learning—using high-quality curricula matched to student assessments, and training teachers in how to use both well. They combine grade-level reading and writing into one daily block that sticks to grade-level texts, even for students who are behind, providing supportive

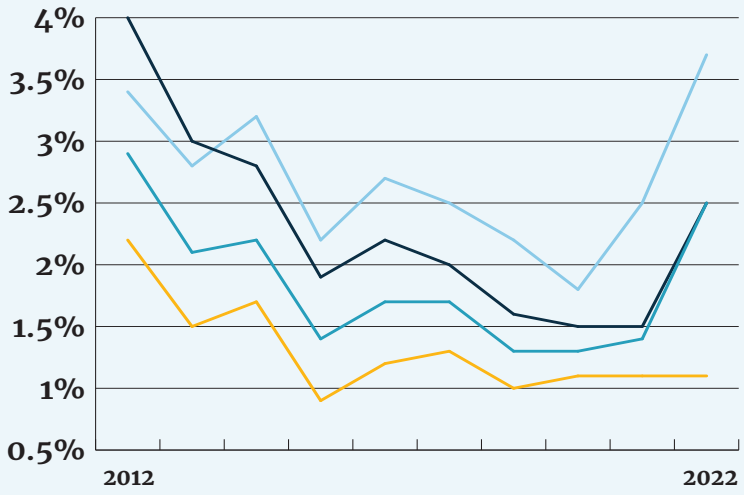
instruction where needed. To help students who might be struggling with grade-level text, a teacher and the entire class read the text aloud together, a technique known as choral reading, with a clear focus.

Unfortunately, this is not true for our entire state. On the 2019 National Assessment for Educational Progress (NAEP), Delaware scored in the middle of the pack in elementary reading achievement. But the percentage of third graders reading proficiently slipped by 3 percentage points between 2015 and 2019. This only grew worse during the pandemic; by 2021, 58 percent of Delaware students scored below or well below "basic."

Delaware has made progress in this area: teacher preparation programs have implemented scientifically-based reading instruction. The state mandates research and evidence-based instructional practices and components in teacher preparation program curriculum, but the mandate remains general and does not specify other parameters for literacy instruction. Delaware still has no pre-service certification exam focused on the science of reading. Current exams for teacher certification required in Delaware are too broad to accurately assess a pre-service teaching candidate's understanding of the science of reading. Additionally, there is no state certificate offered to pre-service, early career or experienced teachers on the science of reading. In 2019, the Delaware Department of Education released a literacy plan to address Delaware's literacy challenges—but it does not address the underlying policies that could help the state make additional progress. As Governor, I will:

- **Embed scientifically-based reading instruction in school curricula** and hold programs accountable for literacy outcomes.
- **Include scientifically-based reading instruction in the teacher certification process,** specifically for elementary school certification. By 2015, 14 states required some form of a reading instruction assessment for teacher certification. Delaware should join them.
- **Require pre-service teachers seeking certification to pass a Foundations of Reading assessment,** as states like Ohio, Arkansas, and Connecticut do.

Delaware Dropout Summary Statistics, 10 Year History



	12-13	13-14	14-15	15-16	16-17	17-18	18-19	19-20	20-21	21-22
State Average	2.9%	2.1%	2.2%	1.4%	1.7%	1.7%	1.3%	1.3%	1.4%	2.5%
African American	4.0%	3.0%	2.8%	1.9%	2.2%	2.0%	1.6%	1.5%	1.5%	2.5%
Hispanic	3.4%	2.8%	3.2%	2.2%	2.7%	2.5%	2.2%	1.8%	2.5%	3.7%
White/Other	2.2%	1.5%	1.7%	0.9%	1.2%	1.3%	1.0%	1.1%	1.1%	1.1%

Dropout rates in high school have been falling nationally for over two decades and Delaware has consistently been far below the national dropout rate. During the pandemic, however, the rates of dropping out unsurprisingly spiked, both nationally and here in Delaware, to roughly double what they had been in 2019. In our state, almost that entire increase came from a surge in dropouts amongst Black and Hispanic children. Chronic absenteeism saw the same pattern – but has continued post-pandemic. We need to take additional steps to bring down the drop-out and absenteeism rates.

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As Governor, I will:

- **Institute an early-warning and intervention system for at-risk kids,** targeting interventions and supports to help students achieve readiness and success.
- **Facilitate the instruction of comprehensive conflict resolution curricula,** particularly in schools with student populations living in our state's highest-violence neighborhoods.
- **Fund graduation coaches** for any student who falls off track for on-time graduation.
- **Provide peer-student mentor programs** for troubled youths.
- **Encourage programs that better engage at-risk students,** including entrepreneurship training and computer literacy.
- **Extend the academic day and year for underperforming students.**
- **Require every student by 9th grade to have a Personal Education Plan for staying in school that addresses their education and career goals,** reviewed annually with the student, their parents, and guidance counselor, to ensure that the student is staying on track and the school is providing the education and resources the student needs to be successful. Students would identify classes needed to prepare for options after high school including, in some instances, apprenticeship, certificate programs, or workforce training. Washington has found success in requiring students to develop "high school and beyond plans" related to achieving postsecondary options starting in middle school.[36]

MODERNIZE SCHOOL SAFETY AND DISCIPLINE.

Disciplinary problems have been rising since the pandemic, both nationwide and here in Delaware. This is not surprising, as many young students missed out on important socialization experiences during formative years throughout the pandemic; many are now experiencing difficulties returning from relative isolation to the bustle of the school setting. Many school officials report that social media only make disputes and arguments worse in real life, as well. We shouldn't be shocked: All this is true in the adult world, too. These problems are exacerbated in schools by the tendency to over-punish students, especially in particular demographics: In the 2021 school year, nearly half of the state's public and charter school districts over-suspended at least one demographic of students. Black students were disproportionately suspended in most of these schools, followed by low-income students and students with disabilities.

As Governor, I will more aggressively address this problem of over-disciplining students, especially students of color and those with disabilities, in the foster care system, and/or experiencing homelessness. Knee-jerk suspension and detentions for students who act out don't improve school safety and discipline: They make them worse and only exacerbate economic inequalities and the challenges these students face in succeeding. Instead, we need to expand state support, teacher training, and funding for restorative justice programs in every school. These emphasize accountability rather than solely punishment – imposing consequences on students that are more logically oriented to bring about desired behavior change than simply kicking students out of school. One example is to help tardy students develop the skills to arrive on time, rather than simply keeping them later after school. Currently, the only mandatory statewide trainings for educators in Delaware are on child abuse detection and reporting, suicide prevention and detecting bullying and gangs; I will require all teachers and administrators to understand the principles of intelligently disciplining students and reducing safety risks, absenteeism and other behavioral issues in schools.

We will also work, with urgency, to expand programs at the Hope Center to eradicate childhood homelessness in Delaware.

And, as part of the "community school" approach discussed above, I will increase funding for mental health supports in all schools.

Expand Out-of-School Programs. A recent Pennsylvania report found that every state dollar spent on out-of-school time programs – after-school, weekend, extended learning, and summer school – will yield $6.69 in future savings, reflecting the likely decrease in high school dropout rates, adolescent pregnancy, substance abuse, and violent crime.

As Governor, I will:

Provide universally accessible summer programs.
Summer programs have been shown to improve student social skills, keep children safe and supervised and improve academic skills. Summer activities include a broad array of enrichment activities ranging from physical fitness, arts programs, STEM activities, and career and technical education programs. For older students, these opportunities can include a hands-on work-based learning or community service component.

Increase funding for after-school programming.
After-school programs support social, emotional, cognitive and academic development; reduce risky behaviors; promote physical health and provide a safe and supportive environment for children and youth. Such programs include academic-based activities, community service projects, specialized skill development in arts and/or science and physical activity like sports or extended recess. After-school programs also provide a significant return on investment, with every $1 invested saving at least $3 through increasing youth's earning potential, improving their performance at school, and reducing crime and juvenile delinquency. Attending after-school programs can improve students' academic performance, particularly for core subjects like reading and math. Attending after-school programs has been shown to improve in-class participation, increase school-day attendance, and reduce school dropout rates. Increased adult supervision reduces instances of at-risk youth being left unsupervised out of school. Adult supervision that is based on developmental relationships promotes positive youth development, increases personal safety, decreases risky behaviors such as smoking or drug abuse and creates an environment where young people learn better. Finally, working families and businesses also benefit from after-school programs that ensure that youth have a safe place to go while parents or guardians are at work. Parents and guardians who do not have access to childcare miss an average of eight days of work per year, and this decreased worker productivity costs businesses up to $300 billion annually. And I will ensure that after-school programming includes hot meals, tutoring and safe transportation home.

Expand language immersion programs to every school in every district so that every student who wants to can achieve foreign language proficiency by high school.

Expand language and coding enrichment programs to all schools.
There's one language that every student ought to know in the 21st Century, and that's computer coding. Every student in our schools today will become a consumer of technology - most already are. When we teach them to be digital producers, we are preparing them for future success. That's why Estonia, the most technologically advanced country in the world, teaches students to code as early as kindergarten. By the time I leave office, we'll do the same here in Delaware. Delaware became a pioneer in language immersion programs under former Governor Jack Markell. The program that started at three schools a decade ago has now grown by twenty-fold to reach students in almost every district in the state. Early evidence indicates that students in such programs perform better on overall academics than their peers.

And that takes me to my next subject: improving the connections between K-12 education and the worlds of both higher education and work.

CAREER, VOCATIONAL & TECHNICAL EDUCATION

The ultimate measure of our school system is how well it does in preparing students to succeed in the adult world. And by that measure, Delaware isn't doing as well as it should. In the EdWeek Quality Counts 2021 report card I mentioned earlier, Delaware scored at only the national average with a C-plus in the area of adult outcomes, which reflects postsecondary educational attainment and workforce indicators.[47]

The impact of this shortcoming is evident as 2,000 teens are not in school or employed, and 7% of adults aged 20-24 are unemployed based on data from 2019.[48]

Delaware Pathways has emerged as a beacon of hope, partnering with schools across districts, and private and public employers, to provide hands-on learning experiences and career opportunities for students. Since the 2015-2016 school year, Delaware Pathways has fostered a remarkable 700% increase in student enrollment, with over 15,000 students participating during the 2019-2020 academic school year. However, with over 42,000 high school enrollments in 2019, my goal is to ensure every student can enroll in a career pathway of their choice from age 14, promoting equal access to valuable career experiences and opportunities.[49] This investment bridges education into real-life applications, supporting our youth's journey to successful careers.

Moreover, I am dedicated to increasing participation in dual enrollment courses, fostering both academic and personal growth. In 2019, only 26% of students participated, with disparities for African American, Hispanic/Latino, low-income students, and students with disabilities.[50] My commitment involves not only increasing overall participation but also ensuring equitable enrollments for all students.

Derived from the class of 2019, it is notable that 40% of high school graduates did not pursue college enrollment within six months after graduation, revealing a significant gap in educational continuity.[51] Nationally, from the class of 2020, 37% of high school graduates did not enroll in a post-secondary institution.[52] However, Delaware stands out as one of six states that has experienced an increase in college enrollment since 2010. Moreover, recent data from 2021 reveals that 44% of 18- to 24-year-olds are enrolled in post-secondary institutions, surpassing the national average of 41%. In comparison to our Mid-Atlantic neighbors, Delaware ranks second highest in enrollment percentage, with New Jersey leading at 47.6%.[53]

Building upon this data, I am committed to ensuring that all our students have equal opportunities to pursue their educational goals and achieve positive outcomes. This initiative begins with providing comprehensive support, including mental health services, which are crucial for addressing adverse childhood experiences impacting 23% of Delaware's youth. Evidence-based Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) programs have shown an 11-percentage point increase in academic achievement, highlighting the significance of investing in the mental well-being of our students.[54]

I will work comprehensively to connect education with successful career outcomes. This must start from the very beginning of young people's educational journeys.

As Governor, I will:

Integrate experiential learning into all subjects at all grade levels. Countless studies have shown—not surprisingly—that students learn better when what they're taught isn't taught in a vacuum but is related to everyday activities and future work activities that provide context to, and value for, the material. Early exposure to potential careers has been shown to benefit students, particularly if they are then able to connect what they observe with the skills they are learning in their classes and can comprehend how their education will allow them to pursue a lifelong career.[55]

Varied opportunities to engage with the world of work, through career talks, mentoring, and excursions to job sites can be invaluable as early as primary school on through to secondary school. Speakers representing different occupations, and concrete examples of what it takes to achieve in them, can inspire young people to explore paths they hadn't considered. Age-appropriate field trips to places of business, where they can see technology in action and glimpse behind the scenes at diverse job sites, can encourage children to imagine new and different careers. If a student hasn't made meaningful connections between their education and their future by the time they reach high school, they may already be allowing doors of opportunity to close.[56] **I will push for curriculum and funding to make available to all children opportunities like these and the ability to envision a larger future for themselves.**

Turn the traditional senior year of high school into something more valuable. The senior year of high school is often an educational "holding action," as students begin to turn their attention to what comes next—whether further education or entry into working life. We should make better use of this final year of secondary schooling to provide students with what they really need.

- Kids ready for college should start taking college classes.
- Kids on the "bubble" for being able to gain college admission should get an intensive year of college prep.
- Kids who aren't headed to college should get improved vocational/technical education and paid internships with businesses.

Create a system for students to pursue dual credit enrollment in vocational, technical and community college courses. Schools can encourage students to pursue these job opportunities by giving class credits, similar to the way colleges will give credits for outside jobs/internships. **I will work to expand and encourage all these opportunities,** including by doing the following:

- Expanding programs such as Cooperative Extension to provide a source of career exploration for students across our state.
- Increasing career counseling in addition to, or as an alternative to, college counseling.
- Providing funding at all schools for job shadowing programs.





Encourage students to pursue apprenticeships and other job opportunities bby giving class credits, similar to the way colleges will give credits for outside jobs or internships. Apprenticeships have become a common and often bipartisan recommendation for improving skill development and employment outcomes for youth who may not complete a college degree.[57] Apprenticeships are most popular in Indiana, Iowa, and Virginia[58]—but there's no reason they wouldn't work as well in Delaware. When executed well, apprenticeship programs provide students with paid workplace experiences and skill-development opportunities nearly guaranteed to be of immediate value to employers within a certain field or industry. The learning-while-earning nature of an apprenticeship also helps to make it a more affordable early career path with less reliance on student debt.[59] Apprenticeships typically last between one and six years, with the majority lasting four years.[60] Though there have been efforts to expand apprenticeship in America beyond traditional building and construction trades, most U.S. apprenticeships are still concentrated in a relatively limited number of fields. Roughly half of current apprentices are either in the construction industry or the U.S. Military Apprentice Program.[61] A 2012 assessment and cost-benefit analysis of registered apprenticeship programs in ten states found that apprentices had significantly higher earnings than similar nonparticipants nine years after enrollment and that the social benefits of apprenticeship programs were likely to outweigh their costs.[62] A 2017 Harvard Business School analysis looked at the outer bounds of occupations potentially suitable to apprenticeship and identified 3.2 million job openings in 2016 that could have been filled through apprenticeship, including many in 47 additional occupations where apprenticeship is not commonly used.[63] **I will work to ensure schools, employers, and unions partner to expand this valuable path to productive careers.**

Establish a Delaware Compact program that will work with the business community to guarantee a job to every student who stays in school and earns a diploma. Under the original "Boston Compact," businesses agreed to hire Boston high school students and graduates on a priority basis for summer jobs, part-time jobs during school and entry-level career opportunities after graduation. A similar Delaware Compact could keep our kids in school, encourage them to graduate, and provide meaningful jobs.

Introduce Civic Readiness. Students graduating from our high schools today too often have learned little about how to engage in a democratic society. Too many Delawareans are left to figure out how government actually works as adults. We will evaluate civics programs across the country, such as New York's Seal of Civic Readiness, and consider it for introduction into Delaware schools on a pilot basis.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Just over half of adult Delawareans have attained a degree or certificate beyond high school, while shy of 60% have attended at least some college. In 2022, 36.5% of Delawareans had a college degree or higher—a respectable rate—but lags behind the 43.8% of Marylanders and 43.5% of New Jerseyans who did.

This makes a huge difference economically: the average high school graduate in our state earns a hair over $30,000 a year. With just a little college, however, that becomes over $37,000. And for Delaware college graduates? It's nearly $52,000 a year. So, it's clear that the more you learn, the more you earn.

Of course, that requires a significant up-front investment: Delaware is only the 32nd-most expensive state in the country for college—but that's still not cheap. The average annual in-state college tuition in Delaware was $12,212 in 2021-2022, $3,040 lower than the national average; UD's in-state tuition was $13,370. (Delaware College of Art and Design was the most expensive, with an in-state tuition of $27,780.) And, according to an analysis by CNBC, University of Delaware alumni are getting more bang for their buck than graduates of other states' schools: the University of Delaware was ranked 24th-best in the nation for highest post-grad salaries relative to cost amongst public colleges.

Nevertheless, Delaware college students are taking on more debt than students just about anywhere, and the average amount of debt for students graduating from Delaware colleges has increased at a faster rate than in any other state over the last decade. Between 2008 and 2016, the average college debt for graduates in our state grew from $20,511 to $36,276, a 77% increase, according to data compiled by the Institute for College Access and Success. This was the fifth highest in the country. The proportion of Delaware students with college debt jumped from 44% to 62%—the tenth-highest in the nation. And it's getting worse: as of 2020, the most recent year for which figures are available, the average student loan debt in our state stood at $38,371.18, but the amount for those graduating in 2020 itself was even higher, at $39,705—second-highest in the nation.

We need to make higher education in Delaware more widespread and easier to afford. I will pursue a wide range of initiatives to make it possible for a wider range of Delawareans to achieve their educational and professional goals to lift our state's economy further in the 21st Century. As Governor, I will:

- **Ensure that our high schools provide more college counseling and scholarship information** to all students and their families, making college education available to a more diverse population.
- **Work with our higher education institutions to provide more resources that ensure students can graduate ontime** once they enter college or skilled labor apprenticeship programs, by allowing previous credits for education and experience to transfer. The key to success is providing wraparound supportive services and counseling.
- **Standardize, simplify and ensure transfer credits.**

Fundamentally, for the good of all our young people individually—and for our state as a whole—we need to focus like a laser on the workforce needs of the future and ensure that the entire pipeline of Delaware's education system is oriented toward meeting future needs.

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MATT MEYER'S GETTING THINGS DONE

Controlling the Cost of Living

It's tough for families to make ends meet these days. This is a global problem: inflation is at record levels, producers of basic commodities like gas and food are raising prices while earning huge profits, and housing is becoming out of reach for more and more people everywhere.

When my wife and I go to Target to buy diapers for our son, I am in disbelief at the costs. This issue is not unique to Delaware—but that doesn't mean we can't address it at the state level if we have leaders committed to getting things done. **There's plenty that states can—and must—do to address the cost of living.** They're doing that in other states: tackling housing costs and availability, expanding health access, and attacking price-gouging by big corporations at a time when average families are feeling pinched. And we need to be doing it here in Delaware, too.

Let me give you just two examples where Delaware is behind the eight ball and could obviously act:

Fifteen states provide a childcare tax credit to help working families with the cost of raising children. Delaware is not one of them. Maryland provides a credit for families making up to $75,000. Pennsylvania and New Jersey lack a parent childcare credit but offer tax credits to employers who make care available to employees, and New Jersey includes tax credits for childcare providers themselves.

Three-quarters of states have permanent price gouging laws. Delaware is not one of them. While the attorney general investigates consumer complaints of unfair price increases, and the legislature passed a law specific to the coronavirus pandemic prohibiting price hikes of 10% or more until the state of emergency ended in 2021,[1] we have no permanent emergency price gouging law.

With real leadership, it doesn't have to be that way. As Governor, **I will fight to enact measures to ensure that prices for necessities like food and gas aren't subject to corporate manipulation and that when underlying factor costs are going down—as now—those price savings get passed on to consumers instead of raising the profit margins of corporations.** I'll fight for meaningful relief for families with young children—including a state childcare tax credit.

And I'll provide direct relief to consumers, especially at the pump. As Governor, I will propose a gasoline tax rebate based on income and location, with higher rebates the lower the family income and the further from Wilmington—which would almost entirely eliminate the inequities across income caused by gasoline price increases. **And I will cut taxes, as well, for working families.** Currently, in our state, a family earning $67,000 a year pays the same rate in state taxes as a family making $67 million. That's not right—I'll institute a progressive tax system to make the wealthy pay their fair share so we can cut taxes for everyone making less than $125,000 a year.

Ultimately, besides controlling unfair costs, the best thing we can do for Delaware families to help them afford the cost of living is to **put more money in their pockets**. We can do that **by raising wages and creating more good jobs across our state.** Don't worry—I've got plans for that, too—that will be my *next* paper.

When speaking with Delawareans across the state, I often hear about families struggling to afford housing and health care. We need full-fledged plans for tackling the two major costs in the average family budget—housing and health care—and doing so for the long term. I have detailed plans for doing that—including, among many other initiatives, home-buying assistance and zoning reforms to promote housing affordability and insurance, provider, and prescription drug reforms to lower healthcare costs. We've been doing it in New Castle County for the last six years. **This paper will detail exactly how we can do that statewide.**

Thanks for reading,

Matt

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ENSURING HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

Housing is a human right; to guarantee that right, we must provide affordable, quality, and safe shelter to every Delawarean. For most Delawareans and most Americans, the purchase of a home is the foundation for the American Dream, a pathway to the middle class, and an opportunity to create long-term financial stability and wealth for you and your family.

To make housing affordable to everyone, we need to build a lot more of it. We need homes of all types, from affordable "starter homes" for first-time buyers to workforce housing in Eastern Sussex and affordable senior housing for those on fixed incomes. We also need more multi-family buildings, rentals, and housing help for families facing eviction.

Because, right now, there's no bigger challenge today than the availability of housing that is affordable.

The state's homeownership rate is declining for all age groups except seniors, and young Delawareans fear that they will never be able to own a home.

Rising interest rates make finding an affordable home that much harder. There are simply not enough homes in Delaware for all the people who want to live, work, and establish their lives and families here.

Rents have been rising faster than incomes in Delaware, and as a result, Delaware has a deficit of over 16,000 affordable homes for families earning less than $35,000 a year. Nearly two-thirds of these families consist of seniors or people with disabilities, while one-third are working and still unable to afford a home.[2] To afford a median-priced two-bedroom rental, a family would need to earn $28 an hour.[3] The median hourly wage in the state is just over $22 an hour.[4] Fifty thousand Delawareans are rent-burdened, meaning they pay more than 30 percent of their income for housing—the standard for housing affordability. And one in five homeowners pay more than 30 percent of their household income. Cost-burdened households are at the most risk of homelessness. One estimate is that eight percent of Delawareans live out of their cars, on the couches of their family or friends, or are experiencing homelessness.[5]

As Governor, I will seek to boost the construction of new homes for all income levels: individuals and families, seniors, and veterans. I will address the regulatory barriers that keep housing prices high and create new programs to finance the construction of housing that meets the needs of our community. I will roll out a strategy to prevent homelessness and end functional child homelessness in our state. I will open up new opportunities for homeownership and bring hope to those who have been priced out of the market.

The Meyer Record

In New Castle County, we launched the most ambitious and successful County government effort ever to address the housing affordability crisis, and as Governor, we will apply them statewide.

We created policies to reduce the cost of new housing, such as increasing Accessory Dwelling Units and reducing lot size regulations, encouraging the development of vacant or underutilized land in existing neighborhoods, and reimagining old spaces. Infill development is especially important for Delaware, where we value preserving our green spaces and farms.

Through the Vacant Spaces to Livable Places initiative, we transformed over 600 vacant housing units into affordable housing. Through this program, we returned properties to the tax rolls, collected unpaid taxes, and provided opportunities for affordable housing in partnership with local community development organizations. As County Executive, I also:

- Increased the number of affordable housing vouchers available to low-income families for the first time in years;
- Established the Hope Center, the state's largest and most comprehensive emergency housing shelter, to help thousands of people get off the streets and into stable housing;
- Partnered to create over 1,000 affordable housing units by creating the largest local government fund for investment in affordable housing in state history, $31 million, to spur the creation and renovation of affordable rental and ownership units;
- Spurred collaboration on a Purpose-Built Community to transform Northeast Wilmington;
- Created the New Castle County Housing Advisory Board of leading affordable housing advocates and empowered it by allocating millions of dollars of funds from our New Castle County Housing Trust Fund;
- Coordinated with Habitat for Humanity to create the Almost Home program, $700 monthly rental homes for families to stabilize their credit and then transition into Habitat for Humanity's home purchase program.

Finally, housing can't be built in a day, can it? Well, in New Castle County, amid one of the greatest domestic challenges our country has faced, we proved that thinking wrong.

COVID-19 wasn't just a public health crisis: the economic ramifications of the pandemic exacerbated existing inequities, rendering countless families unable to pay their rent and throwing them out of their homes.

As County Executive, I believed that we couldn't just stand by and watch hundreds of our neighbors lose housing. So the County government went out and bought a three-star, 192-room hotel by I-95 and converted it into the largest full-service emergency housing in state history, the NCC Hope Center. The Hope Center today provides dignity and comprehensive services to the most vulnerable Delawareans. It has provided wrap-around services to over 4,000 Delawareans in crisis and helped over 400 families transition into permanent, stable, affordable housing. We didn't quite solve the problem in a day—but we did open the doors to the Hope Center in *two weeks*.

If we can meet the housing needs of hundreds of Delaware's most vulnerable residents in two weeks, we will meet the needs of all Delawareans for affordable housing on an ongoing basis. And that's what I intend to do as Governor.

ACHIEVING HOME AFFORDABILITY FOR ALL DELAWAREANS

Home values in Delaware have risen sharply in the past five years, which is good for current owners but not so good for those seeking their piece of the American Dream. There are not enough affordable homes for working parents such as our teachers, nurses, and first responders. Over the past eight years, home values have increased nearly 60 percent in Delaware. In Sussex, the median asking price for a home is over $500,000. We need to expand the supply of starter homes for new families at more affordable levels.

- **Zoning Reform.** One key piece to unlocking affordability is zoning reform. Zoning determines what can be built on a particular piece of land, whether it be a house, warehouse, or retail store. However, overly restrictive zoning can limit the number of homes that can be built. For there to be more affordable homes, our zoning must accommodate more density, multifamily development, and smaller homes on smaller lot sizes. As Governor, I will direct our Office of State Planning Coordination to work with local governments on zoning reforms that will increase the supply of affordable homes. **New opportunities for affordable housing funds will be made available to those counties, cities, and towns that enact zoning changes that allow for more—and more affordable—housing,** like:
  - **Making way for higher-density housing construction and mixed-income neighborhoods.**
  - **Spurring the creation of affordable Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs):** smaller, independent residential dwelling units on the same lot as a single-family home, such as a "grandma apartment" or "in-law suite."
  - **Enacting flexible regulations to allow for new models of shared housing for young families.** I will encourage the creation of 2-in-1 housing, in which public subsidy is provided to build three-floor rental buildings so that two households can be housed affordably in a three-story building.
- **Aiding First-Time Homebuyers.** Many aspiring homeowners can make their dream a reality with just a little assistance. The Delaware State Housing Authority offers several programs for first-time homebuyers, providing low-interest loans and down payment assistance to qualified buyers. These are great programs, but these funds are set to expire under the current Administration. As Governor, I will extend the funding for these programs to help working families bridge the gap to homeownership.
- **Controlling Construction Costs.** Another factor driving housing prices higher is the cost of construction. As Governor, I will pursue strategies to reduce construction costs and make housing more affordable. I will:
  - Relax regulations for affordable housing, including an expedited building approval process and the waiver of certain fees or taxes for affordable housing construction.
  - Pursue building code reforms that can bring down the cost of housing without sacrificing safety. One example is the added costs of having two points of egress in apartment buildings. Single-stair buildings have lower costs, provide more access to light in the units, and have more family-friendly floor plans.
  - Promote energy efficiency upgrades in homes to save on utility costs and provide energy efficiency rebates to homeowners.
- **Subsidizing Affordability.** Because of the high construction cost, affordable apartments will require government subsidies. The biggest subsidy program is a federal program called the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit, or LIHTC, which gives developers tax credits for investing in affordable housing projects. But LIHTC funds are limited and our needs are greater than what LIHTC alone can provide. As Governor, I will create a New Housing Production Fund to provide low-cost financing and get affordable homes built without having to rely on federal subsidies. By dedicating a relatively small amount of state dollars to seed the fund, we can unlock millions of dollars in private capital for affordable housing. The fund provides developers with below-market interest rates or other "gap financing" necessary to start construction, which they repay with interest to reseed the fund for the next project. Similar models exist in Maryland, and this approach has been lauded as an emerging best practice. In order to reach families with very low income, the Fund would be supplemented with a state grant program that would provide gap funding for projects that need further assistance.

- **Assisting Seniors.** Delaware's population is aging, and seniors on fixed incomes are particularly vulnerable to housing cost increases. Rising housing costs have resulted in a sharp increase in homelessness and displacement among seniors.
  - Many seniors are being hit by their first property tax assessment in years and are worried about paying higher property tax bills. We need to do more to ensure seniors can remain in their homes as monthly housing costs increase. **I will enact a property tax "circuit breaker," in which property tax bills for seniors are indexed to income and capped so that property tax bills for income-eligible seniors will not exceed 30 percent of income.**
  - Delaware has a shortage of housing built specifically for seniors. There is no state-sponsored program for the development of senior housing. As Governor, I will **direct the state housing authority to create financing programs for developers of affordable senior housing**—such as providing mortgage insurance, as New York State does.
- **Ensuring Access to Affordable Housing for People with Disabilities.** According to the Centers for Disease Control, one in four adults in Delaware in 2023 had a disability.[6] That's over 200,000 Delawareans. Unfortunately, in a study to understand the best and worst states for those living with a disability, the two indicators on which Delaware ranked lowest were affordability and livability: Delaware has a relatively high housing cost and also has 18% of disabled residents in public housing.[7]

  Delawareans with disabilities require support services along with safe, stable housing. Support services may include case management, mental health services, substance abuse treatment, healthcare coordination, life skills training, and employment services. The lack of adequate supportive housing is one of the biggest barriers to eliminating homelessness and getting individuals with disabilities the care they need. In New Castle County, we were able to create the Hope Center by purchasing the old Sheraton Hotel. Originally conceived as an emergency shelter, the Hope Center has grown its mission to provide supportive services. Christiana Center is on-site, providing medical services, and case managers provide residents with guidance on how to rebuild their lives, such as obtaining identification cards or activating cell phone service. As Governor, I would take the same approach and identify other opportunities throughout the state to integrate services with permanent housing. I will implement new funding models using Medicaid for supportive services and waivers for prenatal and pediatric health services, such as "1115 waivers." Critically, I will create an interdepartmental working group to bring together DSHA, DHSS, local housing authorities, and key non-profit partners in order to develop an integrated approach to mobilizing funds and services to create more supportive housing with enhanced services across the state.

  A study published by the Delaware Journal of Public Health found that individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) face multiple barriers in accessing housing, particularly due to financial, physical, and cultural factors.[8] The housing crisis, including homelessness and instability, affects individuals with IDD at a higher rate (1.6-5% homelessness and 8-15% housing instability) compared to the general population. As Governor, I will implement the report's suggestions:

  - **Systematizing data tracking within the Division of Developmental Disabilities Services to understand the scale of homelessness and housing insecurity;**
  - **Conducting a comprehensive housing needs survey** to anticipate future requirements for community living for individuals with IDDs; and
  - **Supporting further research to** explore the connections between housing and health outcomes for individuals with IDD.[9]

- **Preventing Homelessness.** The number of people in Delaware who were counted as homeless on a given night doubled between 2020 and 2022. There were 3,400 homeless children enrolled in Delaware schools last year, up from 2,600 a year earlier.[10] As needs have increased, there has been little state action to address this challenge.[11]
  - I know how to roll out a rapid response to emerging crises. **As Governor, I will replicate the Hope Center and Pallet Village models across the state.** About 15% of Hope Center residents have a recent Kent or Sussex County home address—which means they are traveling hours for basic housing that is unavailable where it is needed. Hotel conversions are not the only solution. The Pallet Village in Georgetown provides high-quality, stable shelter to 46 individuals in 64-square-foot cabins.[12]
  - The best strategy to end homelessness is to prevent it from occurring in the first place. As Governor, I will:
    - **Enact Good-Cause Eviction legislation** to protect tenants' rights by requiring a good cause for evicting a tenant or non-renewing a lease. This will help keep renters on a path to stable, long-term housing. Five states across the country have implemented good-cause legislation: New Jersey, California, New Hampshire, Oregon, and Washington; our neighbor New Jersey has had such legislation in place for 50 years.
    - **Provide emergency rental assistance** for tenants struggling to pay their rent. And **ensure a right to representation** for people who are being evicted.
    - **Prohibit landlords from turning away rental applicants** simply because they use vouchers or were formerly unhoused.
    - **Enforce the State's fair housing laws** to protect tenants from discrimination.
    - **Establish a landlord mitigation program for accepting voucher-holding tenants.** This program will offer security deposits, damage protection, vacancy loss coverage, a customer service hotline, and landlord workshops. Similar approaches in Marin County, California and Cambridge, Massachusetts have successfully gotten more landlords to rent to voucher holders.
    - We will continue working with the five housing authorities in our state to **streamline the voucher programs,** create a single unified state-wide waiting list, expedite inspections, and offer incentives to landlords.



MAKING HEALTH CARE AFFORDABLE & ACCESSIBLE TO ALL

My wife, Lauren, is an emergency room doctor and one of many community heroes who work selflessly to keep our loved ones safe and healthy in our worst moments. Through her, I get glimpses of a Delaware healthcare system with many intelligent and dedicated professionals working around the clock to keep us safe and healthy.

I hear from Lauren and her colleagues daily stories directly from the front lines of emergency medical care, stories about how Delaware can and must do better.

We need to reduce wait times and decrease costs in our healthcare system to address the issues of accessibility, affordability, and equity.

The Meyer Record

As County Executive, I was on the front lines, leading Delawareans through unprecedented challenges to our health and well-being. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, we prioritized the health and safety of our community. We established fast and free testing sites that conducted nearly half a million tests in just 12 months, the country's first fast, free saliva-based statewide testing. By collaborating with Delaware State University and Testing for America, we took a monumental step by building a cutting-edge laboratory. This state-of-the-art facility played a pivotal role in providing efficient COVID-19 testing. It contributed to advancing scientific testing capabilities to benefit our Delaware State University students and our residents.

In New Castle County, we have made substantial investments in mental health services, recognizing the importance of mental health in our overall well-being. Our commitment extends beyond addressing physical health concerns to prioritizing mental health and providing necessary support and resources for those in need. We created the first Police Behavioral Health Unit in Delaware, collaborating with our hospital system to provide mental health and substance use clinical professionals to respond to critical incidents side-by-side with police. We also became the only County government in Delaware to fund Wellness Centers in elementary schools, so students can access healthcare services right in their school.

These efforts represent my dedication to fostering a healthier, more resilient Delaware. As your next Governor, I will be committed to building on these successes, working collaboratively to address healthcare challenges, and ensuring that the well-being of every Delawarean remains at the forefront of our policies and initiatives.

The Health Challenges We Face

Delaware has troubling health outcomes in various areas, and we need to work on them now.

- **Obesity and Diabetes.** In 2022, Delaware ranked eighth highest in the nation for adult obesity, with a concerning rate of 37.9%.[13] The obesity rate for youth aged 10 to 17, was 16.7%.[14] Adult diabetes emerged as another critical issue, with 12% of the population having diabetes in 2023. Compounding the problem, patients with diabetes incurred healthcare costs 2.3 times higher than those without.[15]
- **Low Infant Birth-Weight.** In 2021, the state ranked 15th for the most low-infant birth-weights in the country, with a rate of 9.1% of infants weighing less than 5lbs 8oz at birth.[16] Low birth weight infants are more susceptible to health problems, including problems affecting the heart, the lungs, the intestines, and eyes. They are also more likely to develop certain health conditions later in life, such as Type 2 diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure, obesity, cerebral palsy, and learning and behavioral problems.[17] The pre-term birth rate in Delaware in 2022 was 1.4 times higher among babies born to Black families than others. Although infant mortality is on the decline statewide, the rate among African Americans remains 2.1 times higher.[18] This is not only devastating for our families, but it is also expensive for everyone: the average hospital cost for a low-birth-weight infant is estimated to be $27,200, and for a very low-birth-weight infant, $76,700, compared to an average hospital cost of $3,200 per birth.[19]

- **Children's Follow-Up Visits.** Delaware faces significant underperformance in children's health outcomes, specifically regarding follow-up on routine care. The Children's Health Care Report Card exposes multiple gaps in crucial areas:[20]
  - Follow-up care for children prescribed Attention-Deficit/ Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) medication, ages 6 to 12, is notably low at 34.2%.
  - Adolescent well-care visits were recorded at a modest 56.7% of Delawareans ages 12 to 21 in 2020.
  - Similarly, only 65.8% of Delawareans in the first 15 months of life received at least the recommended six well-child visits.

Addressing these disparities is not just a health imperative; it is a moral obligation for the well-being of our community.

- **Health Inequities.** Structural racism further contributes to health disparities in Black communities in Delaware. Several health indicators illustrate these disparities, including higher infant mortality rates, a substantial increase in homicide rates among Black men, and a persistently elevated death rate for HIV/AIDS among Blacks compared to Whites.[21] Geographical disparities in health outcomes are stark, with Black communities generally experiencing lower life expectancies. This is particularly acute in Wilmington, which exhibits the highest level of segregation. Data from 2010-2015 showed that "life expectancy varie[d] by approximately 16 years across Wilmington neighborhoods with Black communities generally experiencing the lowest life expectancy."[22] Our state government must do a better job protecting the health and safety of Black and Hispanic individuals. As Governor, I will work with our health department to evaluate which systems aren't working effectively, to identify gaps and inefficiencies in our healthcare systems, and equitably to support the health of Black and Hispanic Delawareans. We will collect specific demographic data, use it to track and prioritize the greatest needs, and set measurable, results-based equity goals with specific attention to disparate impact.[23]
- **Poor Health is Expensive for All of Us.** Sicker patients translate to increased costs as they require more intensive treatment, higher-cost drugs, more staff time, and more supplies and equipment:
  - Delaware has the sixth oldest population in the country.[24] In 2022, more than 20% of Delawareans were seniors, and Delawareans who were 50 or older constituted 41% of the state's population.[25]
  - Diagnosed diabetes costs an estimated $980 million in Delaware each year. An additional $280 million was spent on indirect costs from lost productivity due to diabetes.[26]
  - Delaware hospitals saw increased patient acuity as patients deferred treatments and tests during the COVID-19 pandemic. Medical/surgical length of stay in Delaware hospitals increased by 30.8%.[27]
  - Very low birthweight infant care accounts for 30% of all newborn healthcare costs, totaling over $13 billion in neonatal intensive care unit hospitalizations annually.[28]

Making Health Care More Affordable

We must address the costs of inadequate availability, inequitable treatment, and insufficient health outcomes across the state. As Governor, I will:

- **Increase hospital competition and investment.** Each of Delaware's counties has a single, dominant hospital system. Healthcare costs in our state are rising faster than the national average. Greater competition will produce higher-quality health outcomes with greater efficiency. We should be particularly concerned when the financial return generated from providing healthcare services to Delawareans is invested in expanding healthcare services to communities outside of our state.
- **Push for greater competition on the health insurance exchange.** Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield Delaware is often the sole health insurer offering plans on Delaware's Health Insurance Marketplace. More competition will help bring down costs.

- **Allow businesses and individuals to buy into the state employee healthcare plan,** as Connecticut did. This will not only provide a lower-cost group option for businesses and individuals without other affordable insurance, it will help stabilize the state employee program by bringing in a broader, younger, and healthier pool of workers to cross-subsidize and lower costs for *all* participants. This is only part of what we must do to address spiking healthcare costs in state government, as discussed below.
- **Eliminate medical debt.** Over one in six Delawareans has medical debt, totaling around $401 million.[29] People with medical debt tend to avoid seeking further medical care; it is also the leading cause of personal bankruptcy, and debt levels are higher amongst Black and Hispanic Americans. Last year, Delaware enacted legislation to eliminate strong-arm practices in collecting medical debt, including prohibiting large healthcare facilities from charging interest and late fees, requiring facilities to offer reasonable payment plans, and preventing the reporting of medical debt to consumer reporting agencies for at least one year. But we can and must go further. **To provide much needed relief, Delaware will buy up residents' medical debt at pennies on the dollar.** The state of Arizona, and eight local governments around the U.S.—Cook County (Chicago, IL), Akron, Cleveland, and Toledo (Ohio), New Orleans, Wayne County (Detroit, MI), Washington, D.C., and New York City—have announced programs to do so; typically, these programs can retire at least $100 worth of debt for every $1 of government funds, so that means we could wipe out all medical debt in Delaware for only about $4 million. That's a smart investment that we should make.
- **Invest in a public health system where preventative medicine is rewarded, not reactive medicine.** What's the lowest-cost form of health care? Patients who take preventative steps that keep them out of hospitals and doctors' offices. Healthcare practitioners and institutions that keep patients out of the hospital should be rewarded. We have an aging population and a society that is not set up to care for them. It is much harder to treat cancer than to prevent it from happening in the first place. There should be incentives and reimbursements for patient education about diet, not smoking, and controlling risk factors. We will be a national leader in value-based care, incentivizing our health systems to prevent Delawareans from illness and disease.
- **Control Prescription Drug Prices.** Nearly 80% of people in the United States perceive the cost of prescription drugs as unreasonable. But Delaware truly stands out: in 2020, our state had the highest average prescription drug costs per household, amounting to $6,513. As Governor, I plan to address this problem head-on. We need more transparency in the healthcare system to address the challenges posed by rising drug costs. This includes greater visibility into pricing mechanisms and practices, aiming to provide a clearer understanding of how prescription drugs are priced and paid for. As Governor, I will:
  - **Enact a Drug Pricing Transparency Law.** To foster transparency and accountability in health care, I will enact a drug pricing transparency law requiring drug manufacturers, pharmacy managers, health plans, and others in the drug supply chain to report information explaining high price increases and high-priced new drugs. This will promote fairness and empower consumers to make informed choices about their health care.
- **Expand Medicaid/CHIP enrollment.** Uninsured children are more likely to have unmet health needs and lack a usual source of care, diminishing their chances to grow into healthy and productive adults.[30] In Delaware, 3.8% of children ages 6-18 were uninsured as of 2022. **As Governor, I will work to ensure that all eligible for Medicaid/CHIP get enrolled.** I will enact presumptive eligibility for children's coverage under Medicaid and CHIP so that children don't have to wait until their coverage is processed to access care. Increasing access to coverage will decrease barriers to pediatric intakes and follow-up appointments.

- **Fund State Perinatal Quality Collaboratives (PQCs),** as most states have already.[31] PQCs are state networks that improve the quality of care for mothers and babies. We will ensure that one of the priorities of our state's PQC is addressing the needs of Black mothers so that we decrease the racial disparities in health outcomes for infants and their mothers in our state.
- **Extend multi-year continuous child eligibility for children until they are three years old,** as Oregon did in 2022 and many other states are now beginning to do under Section 1114 waivers.[32]
- **Promote enhanced access to preconception care for women,** particularly those at risk for preterm delivery, with a focus on effective preventive treatments.[33]
- **Decrease infant mortality by increasing awareness of the campaign Safe to Sleep,** which provides resources on reducing the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS).[34]
- **And I will absolutely Defend Reproductive Freedom.** As Governor, I will continue to protect the right to bodily autonomy in our state. I will maintain Delaware's membership in the Reproductive Freedom Alliance, a non-partisan coalition of Governors committed to protecting and expanding access to reproductive care.[35] I will champion a constitutional amendment to enshrine a woman's right to choose in the Delaware constitution. In addition, no person should risk eviction, health complications, loss of employment, or other consequences to cover their medical care. Last year, the legislature failed to enact a measure to ensure that people on Medicaid, private, and state insurance plans can access abortion care without financial burden.[36] As Governor, I will work to enact this needed legislation. **Seventeen states have adopted Medicaid funding for abortion; Delaware must, as well.**

Making Healthcare More Accessible

The COVID-19 pandemic intensified existing workforce challenges, leading to acute shortages, burnout, and stress among professionals. The strain on the healthcare system heightened pre-existing issues of workforce shortages. This has resulted in substantial implications for access to care, including limited appointment availability, diminished quality of care, reduced service availability, increased health disparities, and, of course, elevated healthcare costs.[37]

Delaware faces shortages, particularly in primary care in low-income areas and mental health in specific regions. There are 37 Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSAs)[38] in Delaware, most of which are in Sussex and Kent County. Delaware ranks last in the percentage of needs met at only 16.36,[39,40] while one-quarter of people in our state live in HPSAs. The accessibility affects primary care, dental, and mental health disciplines, creating specific needs in different areas.[41] For instance, the national ratio of dentists per person is one dentist per 1,380 people; in Delaware, it's one dentist per 2,170 people.[42]

While Delaware already provides various financial incentives to attract and retain healthcare professionals, we must expand our strategy. As Governor, I will:

- **Open a Medical School in Delaware to "grow our own."** Delaware is one of only four states without a medical school. A medical school would help us address a shortage of primary care physicians in communities across our state. We already have many of the elements of the best medical programs. We have top-notch research universities and great teaching hospitals. The Delaware Institute for Medical Education and Research, or DIMER, has trained hundreds of Delaware doctors who have kept and continue to keep our families healthy today. But a true medical school that develops top programs in certain specialties or sub-specialties will attract top-level talent to serve our communities.
- **Advocate for increased residency slots,** particularly in Sussex and Kent Counties.
- **Improve data collection** and use it to determine how to invest in recruitment, retention, diversification, program development, and other strategies to address priorities and reduce gaps in access to care.[43] Take advantage of and encourage collaboration within the existing partnerships with Maryland and Pennsylvania of the Mid-Atlantic Regional Collaborative, which collaborates with academic institutions, professional organizations, and interstate licensure compacts to address workforce challenges[44] to collect workforce data, identify shortages, and collaborate on solutions.

- **Implement retention programs to address burnout and foster supportive work environments.** Promote work-life balance, flexible scheduling, childcare support, and wellness initiatives.
- **Incentivize partnerships between urban and rural healthcare facilities** to efficiently distribute resources and introduce financial incentives for healthcare professionals working in underserved areas.
- **Address regulatory barriers by streamlining licensing and accreditation processes** to make it easier for qualified professionals to practice in Delaware.[45]
- **Expand telehealth services** to increase access to health care in remote or underserved areas, enhance efficiency, and reduce physical strain on workers.
- **Encourage the relocation of newly US-graduate-trained physicians from foreign medical institutions:** Develop a Conrad 30 support office to assist practices in federally underserved specialties and provide grants to practices to cover visa waivers and legal fees.
- **Increase financial incentives for physicians, mid-level providers, and hospital RNs in designated underserved specialties** to encourage relocation to and retention in Delaware, such as through waiver of licensing fees, tax credits for loan repayment, realty transfer tax abatement, etc.
- **Market Delaware as a desirable place to practice medicine.** We will create targeted advertising campaigns and job fairs to attract healthcare professionals from other states and meet workforce demands.
- **Encourage collaborative efforts** between educational institutions and healthcare facilities to expand educational, training, and career-ladder options for health professionals until we're able to launch a full medical school program.

Addressing the Needs of Older Delawareans

The costs of care for elderly Delawareans are consistently above the national average: assisted living costs almost 50% above the national average, while skilled nursing costs about 30% more than the cost nationwide. Adult day and home care costs also rank about 10% more than nationwide. As Governor, I will work to make Delaware more affordable for our older population by helping seniors live healthier lives and avoid conditions that drive up the need for and costs of care. I will:



- Support a **coordinated, statewide effort to help seniors lead healthier lifestyles,** manage chronic diseases, and make homes and communities more livable.
- Establish a **statewide clearinghouse** where seniors and persons with disabilities can find information on how to modify their homes for independent living. Provide incentives to developers who incorporate universal design principles into new construction.
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- Create a **community navigator program** to help seniors better access services.
- **Expand public awareness** about available services for seniors and caregivers.
- Provide additional funding and support for **programs that address food insecurity and provide specialized memory care**, as Senate Democrats have called for.
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- **Encourage collaborative efforts** between educational institutions and healthcare facilities to expand educational, training, and career-ladder options for health professionals until we're able to launch a full medical school program.
- **Advocate for increased residency slots,** particularly in Sussex and Kent Counties from the Center for Medicare & Medicaid Services.

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- Support a **coordinated, statewide effort to help seniors lead healthier lifestyles,** manage chronic diseases, and make homes and communities more livable.
- Establish a **statewide clearinghouse** where seniors and persons with disabilities can find information on how to modify their homes for independent living. Provide incentives to developers who incorporate universal design principles into new construction.
- Launch an **anti-fall initiative** to fall-proof seniors' homes.
- Create a **community navigator program** to help seniors better access services.
- **Expand public awareness** about available services for seniors and caregivers.
- Provide additional funding and support for **programs that address food insecurity and provide specialized memory care**, as Senate Democrats have called for.
- **Raise reimbursement rates** for service providers.
- Increase **protections against exploitation and abuse** for seniors.

Undoing the Current Mess on Retiree Health

We need to address the $8.4 billion healthcare liability that our state is facing regarding our state employee retirement health care.[46] We are in danger of having our state's bond rating downgraded—which would cost taxpayers millions of dollars—because the Carney/Hall-Long administration has kicked the can down the road for eight years and tried improperly and unlawfully to solve this problem on the backs of retirees.

This unfunded liability could grow to as much as $20.7 billion if left unaddressed by 2042. In 2022, the Carney/Hall-Long administration proposed moving 25,000 retirees to a Medicare Advantage Plan—the kind of program enacted by George W. Bush that would have required prior authorization for over 1,000 procedures and the use of only in-network doctors, severely restricting the health care that retirees had been guaranteed. The state courts rightly blocked this attempt. Now, Lt. Governor Hall-Long wants to take credit for being required to propose a less onerous plan than the one her Administration originally tried to push through—and she voted for on the State Employee Benefits Committee.

There's a better way to address this challenge. As Governor, I will tackle the underfunding of public pensions. Instead of both kicking the can down the road and trying to penalize retirees, we need to do several things at once:

- **Improve the pension situation for the increasing number of shorter-term state employees** (the trend among younger workers today) by giving them partial vesting at the 5-year mark rather than making them work for ten years before earning any security.
- **Stop pitting retirees against each other**—we're not going to treat one group decently but hurt another, as the current Administration tried to do. We don't need to make this a zero-sum situation, pitting some retirees against others.
- **Bring back matching deferred compensation**—this is a cost-effective way to give better retirement security to state employees at a lower cost to the taxpayers.
- **Fully fund the system by putting in what we owe,** as other states have done and not cutting back on our promises, as the current administration has tried to do.
- **Do all this while being fair to taxpayers.** We can meet these financial needs, and others in this plan, by conducting a thorough statewide efficiency review, which should bring in about an extra $300 million or so per year. I'll describe this in more detail in my forthcoming plan to Make Government Work Better.

Providing Parity in Mental Health

Mental health care in Delaware is in dire straits. Nearly one in five adults will deal with a mental illness each year. Yet, in 2022 (the most recent year for which we have statistics), only 11.6% of mental health care needs in Delaware were being met, signifying a significant lack of psychiatrists and other mental health practitioners in our state.[47]

The lack of access to care in our state is alarming:

- 28.1% (45,000) of adults with any mental illness could not access their needed care (2022). Only nine states had worse numbers. Causes of lack of access include no or limited insurance, undersized workforce, insufficient finances to pay initial costs, and a disconnect between primary care systems and behavioral health systems.[48]
- 27.59% (21,424) of adults with a cognitive disability could not see a doctor due to costs.[49]
- 52.3% (6,000) of youth experiencing major depressive episodes did not receive mental health services.[50]

The shortage of mental health providers in Delaware results in long wait times, limited treatment options, challenges for specific populations, and compromised care quality. This shortage underscores significant barriers to timely and appropriate mental health care in the state.[51]



Cost is one of the main barriers to accessing mental health care.[52] A June 2022 Kaiser poll found that unpaid bills for mental health services accounted for 20% of U.S. medical debt. As Governor, I will:

- **Enhance oversight and regulation of mental health insurance coverage,** simplifying the process for reporting violations and ensuring regular evaluations of the insurance market.
- **Require insurers to submit parity compliance reports** to the Department of Insurance and streamline the process for reporting parity violations, as Georgia has done. I will also push for legislation requiring the Insurance Commissioner to conduct market examinations every four years, as Massachusetts has done.[53]
- **Go beyond the federal No Surprises Act,** which was clarified in 2022 to provide that mental health conditions, substance use disorders, and services provided at behavioral health crisis facilities are included as "emergency services." I will propose a policy as in Washington State to **expand protections to medical specialties not previously covered, such as behavioral health providers and post-stabilization services.**[54] I will also issue guidance on defining emergency services, including behavioral health crisis centers.[55]

And as with the crisis of lack of primary health care practitioners, there is a lack of mental health workers in Delaware. As Governor, I will focus specifically on:

- **Active recruitment** of mental health professionals.
- **Developing strategies for high retention rates** of mental health professionals—as in many other states. For example, the Connecticut Health Jobs campaign, a public/private workforce development initiative, utilized the America's Job Bank database to create a shared talent pool for individual agencies to access and hire from based on their specific needs.[56]

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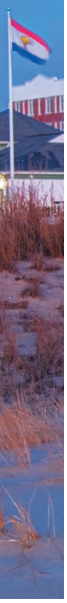


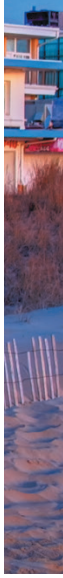




MATT MEYER'S GETTING THINGS DONE

The Climate Solutions Delaware Needs





Delaware has the lowest average elevation of any state in the nation and sea levels are rising at a rate at least double the global average. Wilmington already sees an average of seven more days a year over 90 degrees than it did 50 years ago[1] and sea levels in Delaware have already risen more than a foot since 1900.[2] Across the country we are regularly and repeatedly seeing the impacts of extreme weather events. I will not sit by and idly wait for the impacts of climate change. Rather, my administration will work from day one to make Delaware the most resilient state in the nation. As Governor, I will be a champion for protecting our environment and combating climate change. Not only will we protect our forests, waterways, flora, and fauna, a cleaner environment will also improve health outcomes for all Delawareans. That means building a more resilient and sustainable economy for all Delawareans. And to achieve that, my climate and environmental policy will be centered around three guiding principles.

Here is our plan:

1. **Innovation:**
    - Technology drives innovation and being at the forefront of technological change is essential for Delaware businesses to remain competitive and to grow their productivity. Unfortunately, on one measure of innovation—the number of patents issued per population—despite our rich history of innovation, Delaware now falls into the bottom half of states, far behind leading states such as Massachusetts, California, and Washington. As new technologies drive economic growth, it is critical that Delaware creates the business and labor force ecosystems that allow innovation to flourish.
    - Innovation is also essential to Delaware's—and the world's—ability to address climate change. Some of the technological building blocks to address climate change exist, but many need to be innovated, improved, or invented wholesale. And whoever develops those new technologies will be a global economic leader. As Governor, I will boost funding for university research institutes and university partnerships. Building off of the Innovation HUB model at the University of Delaware, my administration will provide critical funding for research and development for early-stage start-ups, through both public and private sources.
2. **Workers:**
    - Traditionally, Delaware's economy was built on the "Four C's" of chickens, corporations, chemicals, and credit cards. Delaware's rich research and development ecosystems are drivers of innovation, and it is the application of technology that often makes the difference between a low-paying job and a high-paying job—even in traditionally blue-collar industries like manufacturing.
    - The scale of solutions to address climate change is immense and will create significant new technologies, innovations, and businesses. But, critically, these investments must bring more workers into the innovation economy. My vision is for innovation to create jobs that range from the scientists and engineers designing new solutions to the production technicians, electricians, and lab technicians that will be required to produce new products at scale. Blue-collar workers are essential in the implementation of any climate solutions—electricians installing solar and improving our electrical system, construction workers building more resilient infrastructure, building trades building

more efficient buildings and upgrading existing buildings, and port workers supporting the construction of offshore wind farms, to name just a few.

- As Governor, I will broaden our economic development efforts to grow high-paying jobs in other fields, to create more blue-collar jobs with good wages, and to move our state towards a clean, resilient future.

3. **Environmental Justice:**
   - Any climate solutions must be mindful of the impacts on historically impacted communities around the state. Those historical "Four C's" have hugely benefited the state, but have also resulted in communities that have disproportionately been burdened by the negative impacts of our economy, including areas of longstanding pollution. Unfortunately, many of those communities are now also facing the brunt of climate impacts, including low-lying communities that now regularly flood. As Governor, my policies will be mindful of the historical burden on these communities and ensure they are full participants in the climate solutions and economic opportunities presented by a more clean, resilient future.

Addressing the current and future impacts of climate change is not a question of the economy or the environment. Instead, as Governor, my focus will be ensuring that the opportunities created by an innovation economy are accessible to all Delawareans. The commercialization of new technologies and processes will create job opportunities at all skill levels, if we provide adequate on-ramps for workers that are changing careers or seeking to enhance their training.

The Meyer Record

I understand the importance of innovation for economic growth. I am also proud of my record as New Castle County Executive in creating growth while enacting new measures to protect the environment, preserve open space, transition away from fossil fuels, and make our communities more resilient against climate change. Since 2016, we've:

- Launched a 12-week startup boot camp for entrepreneurs called the First Founder's Accelerator.
- Partnered with Swim with the Sharks, Great Dames NeoFes, and the Delaware Black Chamber of Commerce to refine and identify great new local companies through competition.
- Introduced NCCInnovates, a two-pronged approach to supporting startup companies in Delaware, providing tools essential to small and large companies alike. Through this initiative we were able to provide grant opportunities for local startups through sponsoring pitch competitions.
- Implemented the boldest environmental agenda in New Castle County history by expanding renewable energy, fighting against pollution, and preserving natural lands.
- Changed county law to enable large-scale industrial and roof-top residential solar generation.
- Began the county fleet transition to electric vehicles (EVs), required new homes to be EV ready, and installed public electric vehicle chargers at libraries and parks through the "100 Plugs Plan" to encourage EV adoption.
- Made agreements to purchase renewable energy to make New Castle County facilities powered completely by renewable energy, saving the county nearly $80,000 per year.[3]

Delaware needs a climate champion as Governor. The cost of inaction is too high. Delaware—the state with the lowest average elevation of any in the nation—is one of the most vulnerable states to rising seas and hotter summers. We must not leave the worsening climate problems of today to

future generations. Our state goal is to reduce greenhouse emissions by 26% by 2025, while Maryland reduced emissions by 30% by 2020. We can and must do better. The next climate action plan is due November 2025. It needs to include bold policies to achieve our goals of 50% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 and net zero by 2045. It begins with the state government leading by example.

There will be many challenges ahead as we adapt to and battle against climate change. But there will also be opportunities to build better communities, create green jobs, and show leadership on sustainable practices and preservation. With leadership, Delaware can be the most sustainable state in the nation.

Clean Energy and Energy Independence

Delaware has set a goal to have 40% of energy consumed in the state come from renewable sources, such as wind or solar power, by 2035. But currently only two percent of our energy generation comes from renewable sources, ranking Delaware 49th out of 50 states.[4] Under my leadership, we can and will be energy independent. That is not just good for our environment. Generating our own power is great for our economy, as well.

Delaware has a lot of catching up to do if it is to meet key sustainability goals, such as renewables generation and greenhouse gas reductions. We need new leadership and increasing momentum. As Governor, I will double our efforts to expand renewable energy generation.

- **The First Truly Energy Independent State** – Nearly every Delaware property owner pays an electricity bill. Nearly all of the money to generate power leaves our state. Much of that money funds fossil fuel industries of yesteryear. There are unique opportunities today for us to generate all of our energy in state and offshore, by investing in solar and wind power generation for Delaware. We have a competitive advantage with wind due to our Atlantic Coast location. We will prioritize developing off-shore wind—with respect for and in collaboration with coastal communities. We will further invest to develop the trades to expand career opportunities for Delawareans in our green energy future. And we will update Delaware's Renewable Energy Portfolio Standards to produce 100% of our electricity from renewable sources by 2045.
- **Solar Power** – Despite Delaware being named one of the best states for rooftop solar potential,[5] Delaware lags far behind other states in deployment of rooftop solar. One estimate is that Delaware could meet one-fifth of its energy needs through solar roof installations alone.[6]
- But too many of our projects to create or install renewable energy are being delayed. New solar power projects are backlogged, waiting to get connected to the grid by the region's grid operator. Local governments put up roadblocks to solar generation. I'm encouraged by the state's new Community Solar program, and most new applications for solar have been for smaller, community solar installations.
- As Governor, I will work with local governments to expedite solar installations at both the community and utility scale, prioritizing solar developments where they make sense, while balancing agricultural preservation and conservation needs with the siting of new solar farms and other future land use.
- **Offshore Wind** – One of Delaware's biggest opportunities for renewable energy generation comes from offshore wind. Efforts dating back to 2008 have stalled, but now new momentum is gaining for projects 12-30 miles off of Delaware's shores. By harnessing wind power miles off shore, Delaware has the potential to power *nine million homes*.[7] For as long as there has been an electric grid, Delaware has imported energy. With leadership we can change that and export power to neighboring states. That is winning in the green economy of tomorrow.
- Offshore wind projects are big, complicated, and require government stewardship. Any solution to unlocking wind power will require strong multi-state partnerships. Renewable energy in the

mid-Atlantic is a regional issue. That's why I will collaborate with neighboring states to produce and procure renewable energy as new facilities come online.

- As Governor, I will push forward plans for new offshore wind farms in Delaware waters, and we will do so responsibly. Delawareans are rightly concerned about the impact of wind farm construction and operations on the natural environment and on their local communities. We will spearhead an inclusive, community-led process to understand community concerns and develop strategies to minimize disruptions due to construction and to protect vulnerable habitats.

Innovation and Clean Fuels

Ever since DuPont opened up operations in Delaware 200 years ago, the chemicals industry has been a big part of Delaware's economy. Chemical manufacturing is the largest manufacturing industry in Delaware, generating $2 billion in economic output.[8] But like all industries, technological innovation is driving change.

Biotechnology and Life Sciences

One of the most exciting technologies under development is the production of clean hydrogen energy. Hydrogen is a clean fuel that, when consumed in a fuel cell, produces only water.[9] Expanding the use of hydrogen and the production from renewable sources could be a major breakthrough in the transition away from fossil fuels. Hydrogen has the potential to power things like construction equipment and other heavy transportation vehicles, a particularly difficult area of decarbonization. Eventually, hydrogen could be used to power our homes. It could be the way to create low-emissions aviation and sea transport. And hydrogen could be a leading option for storing energy created through renewable sources.

Delaware is part of a regional partnership that was recently chosen by the U.S. Department of Energy to receive up to $750 million in federal funds. MACH2 is a project to develop clean hydrogen production and distribution. The project is expected to catalyze the creation and retention of more than 13,000 well-paying jobs in the low carbon economy, across Delaware, Southeast Pennsylvania, and Southern New Jersey.

Delaware has a strong legacy of leading research and development in chemical and pharmaceutical manufacturing. As a result, Delaware's biotech R&D workforce concentration is more than 1.5 times the national average. We have a rich ecosystem of collaborative educational and research institutions, including the Delaware Biotechnology Institute, Delaware Innovation Space, Delaware Technology Park, Dupont Experimental Station, Chestnut Run Innovation and Science Park, and the Fraunhofer USA Center for Molecular Biotechnology, among others. The National Institute for Innovation in Manufacturing Biopharmaceuticals (NIIMBL) recently built a $156 million, 200,000 square-foot building at the University of Delaware's STAR Campus.

If done right, the next stage of Delaware's biotech expansion will be in the manufacturing of new pharmaceuticals and medical products. I will pursue models such as MassBioEd, a Boston-area training program for production technicians in the life sciences fields. They've developed a four-month training program in affiliation with Northeastern University, followed by a 12-month apprenticeship at active manufacturing plants. Programs like these allow for more Delawareans to participate in the innovation economy and get their ticket to the middle class.

As Governor, I will ensure that this partnership remains strong and stays true to its green energy goals. We will continue to be the strongest partner, and through programs in our high schools, trade schools, and universities, we will train our workforce of tomorrow to win in the regional hydrogen economy.

Buildings and Energy Efficiency

One-third of emissions are derived from buildings. Tackling this challenge starts with the government leading by example. As Governor, I will set a goal for state government facilities/operations to be net zero by 2030.



One promising technology is modern, efficient heat pumps, which can reduce energy usage for home heating by 65%. The Inflation Reduction Act includes a program for heat pump rebates of up to $2,000 for purchase and installation, a huge increase from the $300 rebate offered previously. As Governor, I will provide additional state rebates to maximize the impact of the federal contribution.

The State's weatherization assistance program has overly restrictive eligibility requirements, and as Governor I will expand eligibility to more households. The same is true for the State's solar incentive programs. I will expand these programs' reach by extending eligibility to more middle-class families.

In our urban areas, hotter summers are taking an increasing toll on public health. Experts predict it will get worse. My administration will work with cities on urban heat mitigation strategies, such as street trees, green roofs, efficient air conditioning rebates, and cooling centers.

Transportation, Distribution, and Logistics

Transportation remains one of the largest sources of greenhouse gases in Delaware and across the country. But with any challenge also come opportunities. Delaware's location puts the entire mid-Atlantic region—the largest consumer market in the U.S.—within reach. I-95 is the backbone of the most densely populated region of the U.S., and major freight railroads crisscross the state. Fifty million people live within 250 miles of Delaware.

While warehouse jobs tend to pay low wages with few benefits, Delaware has all the ingredients needed to attract jobs with good incomes in logistics and supply chain management. Dover Air Force Base is the Department of Defense's largest and most technologically-advanced aerial port and a leader in supply chain management and technology. As Governor, I will promote public-private partnerships with Dover AFB to expand the state's private-sector logistics workforce and seek new applications of emerging technologies in this evolving field.

Economic growth in Delaware is constrained by outdated infrastructure such as our roads, bridges, energy distribution systems, ports, and broadband. As Governor, I will prioritize critical investment in our infrastructure in order to catalyze economic growth, create more jobs, and boost our exports. I will make sure we invest in:

- **Hydrogen** – Discussed in more detail above, hydrogen has the potential to help decarbonize some of the most challenging aspects of the transportation sector. Construction equipment, farm vehicles, and other heavy vehicles, especially those that need to be running many hours of the day, are not easily electrified. Hydrogen, however, has many of the same benefits of

gas and diesel—lots of energy packed into a small amount of fuel, allowing equipment to run for hours on end—without the greenhouse gas emissions. With leadership, Delaware's combination of proximity to transportation corridors, potential massive quantities of power from offshore wind farms, and proximity to water, provide the potential for Delaware to be a national leader in hydrogen.

- **Port of Wilmington Improvements** – Port infrastructure is critical for getting Delaware's exports to domestic and international markets. About one-in-five jobs in Delaware are related to exports. A more-than-$200 million investment is underway at the Port of Wilmington's Edgemoor terminal to help boost our exports and manufacturers. As Governor, I will ensure that necessary improvements at the ports—as well as the roads that lead to them—will be made to support our exports and grow the economy.
- **Business Park Support** – Manufacturing, industrial, and logistics and distribution employers are constantly on the look-out for development sites that are ideal for efficient, modern operations. One key to ensuring that they choose Delaware is to have development-ready sites at business and industrial parks. I will support localities that want to complete pre-development of sites to get them development ready. As New Castle County Executive, I created the JobsNow program, which streamlined the approval process for projects that create jobs. The program drastically improved turnaround times, set records for efficiency, and created or retained over 13,000 jobs in New Castle County.
- **Airports** – Wilmington Airport is seeing new record numbers of travelers, a boon to the State's economy. But the airport is over capacity in the busiest months. To ensure we can continue to accommodate increasing demand and allow for more flights to more destinations, upcoming airport expansions will be critical. The Delaware River Bay Authority is moving forward with a $12 million expansion plan to add a new gate, expand the passenger waiting area, and add food service. As Governor, I will work with the Authority on how to market these improvements to attract more service. We further will invest to expand training opportunities in avionics at the Wilmington Airport and Delaware Coastal Airport and in collaboration with Delaware State University's award-winning Aviation Program. According to the International Civil Aviation Organization, the aviation industry will need 480,000 new technicians to maintain aircraft and over 350,000 pilots by 2026. This labor shortage is causing flight delays, passenger inconvenience, and higher prices across the country.[10] With the facilities and the talent that we already have, this is a tremendous opportunity for Delaware to serve as a training ground for the world of flight, while creating substantial career opportunities in underserved areas across Wilmington and our state.
- **Pedestrians and Cyclists** – [See below]
- **Transit, Bus, and Trains** – [See below]
- **And most of all: Surface Transportation.** For decades, Delaware's economic backbone has been its transportation infrastructure, including the I-95 and Northeast Corridor. Our roads, rails, and ports allow our manufacturers to get their goods to market. But the poor state of our transportation infrastructure is crimping Delaware's economic potential. Today, Delaware gets low grades for its transportation infrastructure. The Reason Foundation ranks Delaware 35th in the nation for the overall condition and cost-effectiveness of its highway system. Delaware has particularly low scores for the quality of pavement on highways, urban congestion, traffic safety, and cost.

Planning, Adaptation, and Open Space

The policies and strategies guiding statewide development are outlined in the Delaware Strategies for State Policies and Spending. The document defines the state's goals and policies for land use, infrastructure investment, and other priorities, and identifies areas of the state as one of four "investment levels". These levels indicate the appropriateness of new development and infrastructure investment.

The "Strategies" must be updated every five years, by law, and the next update is 2025. As Governor, I will ensure that the next Strategies document gives teeth to the enforcement of development guidelines to ensure that new development is discouraged in those areas least able to support it because of infrastructure or environmental concerns. This is especially important for protecting precious open space in Kent and Sussex County and also protecting the state's floodplains.

My administration will make the preservation of farmland and open spaces a priority. Last year, the State set aside $20 million for the state's Open Space Program. My goal as Governor will be to engage with the philanthropic sector, as well as to utilize funds from my comprehensive statewide efficiency review, to sustain our investment in preserving farmland, for environmental and community sustainability, and for food security.

One of my proudest accomplishments as New Castle County Executive is the preservation and conservation of natural lands. We preserved 250 acres of farm and wildlife lands from future development, protecting water quality and conserving critical habitat. As County Executive, I was proud to announce that we received federal funds for the expansion of the Jack A. Markell Trail, connecting Wilmington to Newport, and setting the stage for the eventual 16-mile Wilmington Loop project.

This year, with the expansion of White Clay Creek Park, Delaware celebrated a milestone of 45,000 acres preserved through the Open Spaces Program since 1990. As Governor, I will push to have 50,000 acres preserved by 2032. I will provide funding for more biking and hiking trails throughout the state, to promote alternative transportation and motorless connectivity.

A 2023 Supreme Court decision wiped away protections for nearly half of the wetlands in the U.S., meaning that they are under threat from developers and polluters. As Governor, I will work with the state legislature to preserve any wetlands that would lose their status under the new federal rule.

We must also face the reality of the climate consequences that are already here and will get worse over the coming decades. Over the past century, Delaware has already experienced one foot of sea level rise and sea level rise is accelerating. Compounding this problem, the Delmarva peninsula is sinking. Over the next 90 years, between eight and 11 percent of Delaware is at risk of being inundated by flooding.[11] Delaware needs a strategy to adapt to dramatic sea level rise that will include zoning changes, land acquisition programs, building restrictions, setbacks and buffers, and conservation easements.[12] As Governor, I will direct the Office of State Planning Coordination and the Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control to work with local governments on a land use plan to adapt to rising sea levels.

Investing in Our Workforce

Delaware's transition into a sustainable, green economy will bring billions of dollars in investment into the state and foster the creation of new green job opportunities. But to fully realize the economic potential of the historic investments in green technologies and processes, we will need clear direction and strong leadership from Dover.

We will need to prepare our workforce for jobs in emerging and growing fields. Career pathways into green careers can be developed in partnership with workforce development organizations, educational institutions, labor unions, and employers. It will also require regional partnerships, as many of the biggest projects to impact Delaware's green economy are regional initiatives.

The Meyer Record

- In New Castle County, we launched a program with local union laborers and the state Department of Labor to train unskilled, young adults for good union jobs. The program has now trained over 140 women and men, almost all Delawareans of color, many of whom are returning citizens coming out of the criminal justice system.
- I invested part of our federal pandemic recovery funding in workforce development programs like the Launcher entrepreneurship program for small businesses to gain valuable training and resources.
- Supporting an innovation economy starts with educating our youth, which is why I focused on enhancing coding skills for youth at all education and skill levels. The 1,000 Kids Coding program provides summer and year-round coursework and hands-on coding projects for students, and Zip Code has enabled hundreds to transition, mid-career, into the innovation economies of tomorrow.

Green & Blue Jobs

There are opportunities for our universities to lead innovation through research into emerging fields and technologies. One example is the "blue economy" and the role of "blue technology"—technology used to understand, explore, and manage the marine environment—in creating sustainable methods and technologies that protect our oceans and waterways. The University of Delaware's College of Earth, Ocean & Environment is leading research into new blue technologies and received a $1.3 million grant from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. As this sector grows and matures, there will be more opportunities for marine technicians, engineers, mechanics, and electricians, for example, to find jobs in the blue economy.

The transition to a clean economy will be transformative, creating new technologies, processes, businesses, and jobs. Wind power, solar power, the weatherization of older buildings, sustainable construction techniques for new buildings, EV charging station installation and maintenance, and the introduction of high efficiency heat pumps—all of these approaches will be necessary to meet our state, national, and international greenhouse gas reduction goals. Fighting climate change will improve the lives of Delawareans by creating good-paying jobs and improving air and water quality.

I will solicit the best bids for Delaware: those that create jobs in-state and provide flexibility in pricing. I will work with local communities to create a process for transmission access, to find a landing point for power cables connecting the grid with offshore turbines.

Preparing Workers for All These Jobs

As Governor, I will ensure that the opportunities of new job growth are equitably shared among all of Delaware's communities. Women and people of color are underrepresented in the energy workforce, and it is critical that we increase the diversity of the clean energy workforce. My administration will develop career pathways into the green economy for all education and skill levels. Currently, there are too few opportunities for green jobs training in Delaware. My administration will develop new green job pathways from K-12 programs in STEM fields, to Career and Technical Education for green jobs, career certificate training programs, and apprenticeships.

One promising program for youth is the City of Wilmington's Green Jobs program in partnership with the University of Delaware's Water Resources Center. This 6-week program exposes urban youth to careers in environmental science. Fourteen youth between the ages of 14 and 18 are taught about environmental stewardship through activities such as water quality monitoring, surveying local streams to evaluate the health of bivalves such as mussels, and learning about opportunities in environmental careers.

The University of Delaware is an extremely important partner in the training of the state's green workforce and will take the lead in training workers for the MACH2 clean hydrogen project coming to our region. For jobs in residential energy efficiency, the Inflation Reduction Act makes available $200 million for state grants to train job seekers to become energy efficiency contractors. With Delaware's share of the funds, my administration will partner with non-profit community organizations to extend training opportunities to both rural and urban Delawareans.

Green jobs will be included as a career pathway in our state's high schools. Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs allow Delaware students the chance to earn early college credits, industry-recognized credentials, and work experience while still in high school. But there is currently only one CTE program in the state related to green jobs, and that is offered at only one high school. I want to create more opportunities for green job CTE training in our high schools. As Governor, I will ensure that students interested in class credit for technical careers in green energy can easily find opportunities to do so.

Delaware needs more opportunities for certificate training in green careers like energy efficiency and solar installation. In New Jersey, Rowan University created a Green Jobs Academy to prepare workers with required industry credentials for jobs in offshore wind and solar power. As Governor, I will build off of existing programs at Delaware Technical Community College to expand offerings in a wider range of green career opportunities.

Some job seekers need additional training before they are ready for an apprenticeship. The State of Illinois created the Climate Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program with $10 million in funding to provide a pathway to an apprenticeship in renewable energy. The program prioritizes underrepresented populations and communities that have historically faced economic and environmental barriers. As Governor, this is the type of approach I would take to link new job seekers with new job opportunities.

Training for the jobs of tomorrow also must include vocational training and training to support and protect good union jobs. As Governor, I will introduce new apprenticeship programs that allow Delawareans to "earn while they learn" for new careers in the green economy. No other state, apparently, has yet taken the lead in this future growth area. I will make it easier for those who prefer to work in the trades to find programs, apprenticeships, and internships that prepare workers for the jobs needed to power a modern economy, by supporting registered apprenticeship programs and working to connect skilled labor with high-quality jobs.

I also will quickly start a Quick Start program. Modeled after the Georgia Quick Start program, we will develop and systematize customized workforce training for companies looking to hire skilled workers immediately. This would be a proactive rapid response program. The typical, and federally funded, rapid response system is designed to quickly find job placement for workers that have been recently laid off. What is missing is a rapid response system for employers looking to hire; the Quick Start program is designed to fill that need. The Quick Start program in Georgia is designed to provide customized training for companies looking to expand or locate within Georgia. There currently is no similar program in Delaware.

And finally, I will make sure that opportunities exist for workers of all ages through Lifelong Learning, by:

- Continuing to develop programs for non-traditional students, such as the formerly incarcerated and people older than 25, with options beyond high school that award post-secondary credentials.
- Supporting and expanding workforce development programs.
- Supporting earned credits for adult learners seeking secondary degrees at state schools.

Investing in Our Infrastructure

Broadband – Broadband access and connectivity are essential for businesses and residents to participate in today's economy. Delaware is expected to receive over $100 million to bring internet to all Delawareans under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. Our priority will be to continue the work of the Carney Administration, connecting underserved and rural areas first, on our way to becoming the first fully connected state in the nation.

Traffic congestion is negatively affecting our quality of life. Poor planning has led to sprawl, generating more traffic and longer trips. In the summer beach traffic overwhelms coastal communities. Only six other states have worse congestion.[13] We need to implement strategies that allow traffic to flow more efficiently.

We need to do more to improve traffic safety—too many Delawareans die while simply trying to get from one place to another. We have a higher traffic fatality rate than neighboring states. At 13.5 traffic deaths per 100,000 population, more people die on Delaware roads, per capita, than Pennsylvania (9.5 per 100,000), Maryland (9.1), and New Jersey (7.5).[14] If Delaware had a traffic fatality rate equal to New Jersey, there would be 60 fewer traffic fatalities in the state every year.

I will do more to improve conditions for biking and walking. Delaware ranks 41st among states in terms of cyclist fatalities.[15] We need more protected bike lanes and more bike trails. As New Castle County Executive, I was proud to announce funding for the Newport River Trail, which will connect Newport with Wilmington and New Castle. The trail is a once in a lifetime opportunity to connect communities, encourage healthy lifestyles, and provide an alternative to vehicle trips on our roads. I want to find opportunities for more "bike highways" that can not only link Delawareans with recreational opportunities, but be a viable means to travel to work safely and without the expense of owning a car.



Delaware's transit service, DART, needs a new plan to adapt to a world transformed by the COVID-19 pandemic, which changed where and how people get to work. Transit ridership in Delaware has rebounded faster than the national average, but even before COVID, transit ridership was declining in Delaware. For transit service to be successful, it needs to be frequent, safe, and reliable. Right now, DART operates only one "frequent" service with frequencies of 15 minutes or better and wait times for buses can vary widely.

As Governor, I will seek to boost transit ridership, improve our roadways, find efficiencies in and cost savings for road projects, create new pedestrian and cyclist infrastructure, and improve traffic safety.

The Meyer Record

- Created the most collaborative, inclusive, and diverse process in Delaware history to draft our award-winning Comprehensive Plan.
- Designed and signed into law the most comprehensive water safety and anti-sprawl policies in Delaware local government history.
- Designed and passed into law the most comprehensive forestry and tree protection ordinance in our county's history.

- Opened first new county park in 15 years in the Edgemoor Gardens neighborhood of Wilmington.
- Enhanced equestrian offerings at Carousel Park, including a new cross-country course and two-time Olympic gold medalist instructor; hosted U.S. Special Olympics Equestrian Team training.
- Launched Connecting Communities partnership to leverage the new Markell Trail and build 12 new trail and pathway connections. This new trail will improve safety, provide new transportation options, and support public health.
- Strengthened stormwater regulations and building rules that resulted in a reduction of flood insurance premium rates for every New Castle County property owner.
- Reduced sewer overflows by 40% in two years by employing new technology.
- Enacted enhanced septic, stormwater, and forestry regulation that resulted in FEMA increasing flood insurance discounts for every New Castle County homeowner.
- Preserved a record amount of open space in New Castle County, including both farmland and parkland.
- Distributed hundreds of low-cost rain barrels to Delawareans, enabling them to use rainwater more efficiently in their own homes and save money.
- Created and have begun building the most comprehensive bikeable, walkable plan in County history, including the largest-ever grant received by New Castle County for a bikeable/walkable trail (first stage connected Wilmington to Newark).[16]
- Granted the largest competitive transportation funding ever received by a local government in the state's history, a $23 million federal U.S. Department of Transportation RAISE grant. The funding will connect Wilmington to Newport by a beautiful bicycle path and funds the most challenging part of the Wilmington to Newark bikeable walkable trail.[17]
- Hired New Castle County's first Sustainability Coordinator to lead the county's effort to establish and implement a sustainability plan.

Roads and Highways

Delaware was recently dubbed the "3rd worst state to drive in."[18] And while state rankings like these should always be taken with a grain of salt, when you talk to Delawareans they will tell you about their frustrations with traffic congestion and pothole-riddled roads.

To repair our highways and roads, Delaware will receive nearly $1.5 billion from the American Infrastructure Act. Unfortunately, the Diamond State scores poorly on the cost-effectiveness of roadway construction and repair. As Governor, I will seek ways to reduce the cost of our roadway projects so that we can do more projects for the same amount of money.

As Governor I will implement enhanced traffic light technology to make corridors more efficient during busy times and reduce needless red light wait times during off hours. And we can cut traffic congestion by using new technology that sets variable toll rates, or tolls that are higher when demand is higher and low—or nonexistent—when the roadway is empty.

An important step to improving congestion in Sussex County is the Coastal Corridors study, which is considering improvements to Route 16 and Routes 404/9 to improve east-west traffic to points on the shore. Other improvements that will be a priority for my administration will be:

- Resiliency upgrades for SR1, to protect against flooding.
- Improvements to US 113—to create the first north-south limited access highway in Delaware.

- Improvements for freight and trucks on east-west corridors through Kent County.
- Improvements to the Five Points intersection near Lewes—need full details, and pluses and minuses.

Cyclists, Pedestrians, and Traffic Safety

As Governor, I will also take action to improve traffic safety in the Diamond State. Delaware ranks 38th among states in terms of traffic fatalities per capita. Our traffic fatality rate is nearly twice that of New Jersey.[19] In 2022, Delaware tied its record high for traffic fatalities set in 1988 with 165 lives lost on our roadways. My administration will work to identify dangerous corridors and intersections and fund road projects that seek to improve safety for all users, including pedestrians and cyclists. Models include the process underway in Wilmington, which just received a $200,000 federal grant to improve safety on local roadways.

One-in-three fatal crashes are a result of speeding, according to a study of five years of crash data.[20] Speeding on urban roadways is often a result of how the roads are designed. Wide arterial roads encourage speeds that are unsafe for pedestrians as well as those in vehicles. Streets can be designed in ways that discourage speeding while protecting other users. If a street has a 45 MPH speed limit, that road should not be designed for 60 MPH speeds.

Delaware has been slow to roll out traffic safety programs. DelDOT finally released its "Complete Streets Guide" in the fall. A "complete street" is one that takes into account the needs of all road users, from motorists to pedestrians and cyclists. The Guide provides design guidance for state, county, and local transportation staff to create comfortable and viable complete streets. As Governor, I will tie state funds to projects that promote complete street principles, including protected bike lanes.

As New Castle County Executive, I am extremely proud of our work to bring a $23 million grant to the county that will create the Newport River Trail, a bike and pedestrian path connecting the town of Newport with the cities of Wilmington and New Castle. In the south, the same type of grant will provide $21 million for a 17-mile path connecting Georgetown and Lewes in Sussex County.

Projects like these can be a means of reducing car traffic, and it can be a means of reducing cost of living. They also make Delaware a better place to live and raise a family. New trail projects will be a priority for my administration, and ideas for a trail from Claymont to Fox Point, as well as the Brandywine Heritage Trail and the Wilmington Loop.

I will also encourage the construction of more protected bike lanes in urban areas. As Governor, my administration will provide planning assistance and grants to localities that seek to improve safety for cyclists. High-speed arterial roads are the most common places for cyclists to be struck and injured or killed. We need to either provide viable alternative routes—bicycle highways—or bike lanes that protect cyclists from traffic.

Improving Bus Service

Many transit agencies are reevaluating their routes and timetables to minimize the amount of time a customer must wait for the next bus. The "gold standard" is to have a bus arrive at least once every 10 minutes on the busiest routes. But there are no bus lines today that live up to that standard and there is only one bus route in the entire state with frequencies of once every 15 minutes. All other lines operate at two buses an hour or less. As Governor, I will direct DART to prioritize frequent service with headways of 10 minutes or less on the most popular routes.

To ensure that these buses stay on schedule, my administration will work with local governments to create dedicated bus-only lanes to prevent buses with hundreds of riders on them from being stuck

behind single-occupancy cars or double-parked trucks. We will implement bus signal priority, in which green light cycles are extended for buses approaching an intersection, on the busiest routes to prevent bottlenecks. And my administration will roll out the first true "bus-rapid-transit" lines in Delaware history. This type of service provides dedicated lanes, pre-boarding fare payment (waiting for customers to pay the fare as they board the bus leads to delays), and frequent service.

To fill in service gaps in areas outside of transit corridors, my administration will support the expansion of "micro-transit" options. This Uber-like service allows for customers to request a ride via an app or by phone. Shared-ride transit vehicles are dispatched to pick up the customer, either at the exact location of the request or a customer may have to walk a block or two to the nearest pick-up location. Customers are then dropped off near or at their destination. DART is rolling out a pilot program called DART Connect in Newark. If the program proves successful, my administration will implement this type of service in other parts of the state.

Another of my top priorities as Governor will be to improve the accessibility of the transit system for those with a disability. Current paratransit service is not reliable and often more than an hour late for pickups. Again, the solution may be creating on-demand paratransit service like Uber. Disabled residents should not be treated like second-class citizens and our transit system needs to be accessible to everyone.

Unfortunately, in a study to understand the best and worst states for those living with a disability, the Delaware transit system scored a 35/100, and Delaware was given a 41/100 walkability score.[21]

The American with Disabilities Act requires DelDOT to develop a Transition Plan that identifies "physical barriers that limit accessibility to programs, services, and activities offered by the entity as well as describing the methods that will be used to make modifications and creating a schedule for making the required modifications."[22] While DelDOT adopted the required plans in 2015 and 2018, that basically came to a stop under the current Administration, and there are no public plans currently available.[23]

As Governor, I will work with DelDOT to ensure that all ADA non-compliant features are expeditiously funded, completed, and certified as compliant.

Improving Passenger Rail Today

Expanding passenger rail in Delaware won't happen overnight. But before we can hope to extend mass transit downstate—or direct to the airport—Delaware must take steps now to improve service to Philadelphia and grow ridership at the stations we currently have (plus one more). If we prioritize certain steps in the right order now, then we can reach our goals faster and eventually operate our own statewide train service.

- To grow ridership, improve existing service now!
  - Philadelphia will always be the busiest rail hub in our regional network, so we should do everything possible to capitalize on that and start building ridership.
  - Long travel times are hurting ridership. We must work with agencies currently operating train service on the Northeast Corridor (SEPTA/Amtrak) between Delaware and Philadelphia to **subsidize more express trains.**
  - By skipping stops in Delaware County, riding SEPTA from Claymont to Penn Medicine will be just 20 minutes, a shorter commute to west Philadelphia than Frankford, which is a 25-minute ride on the El. This will be a game-changer.
  - Delaware could also subsidize Amtrak service between Wilmington and 30th Street Station,

much like Connecticut does on the Hartford Line, so that Amtrak tickets are the same price as SEPTA, or $7 to $8 depending on how you pay.

- Improve existing stations, plus a new station in Newport.
  - Raised platforms allow train passengers to embark/disembark more easily and also require fewer crew members per train to manage, thus controlling operating costs.
  - Upgrade all stations in Delaware to raised platforms: two stations have raised platforms (Wilmington & Claymont) and two do not (Newark & Churchmans).
  - Build a fifth train station in Newport: it can be done more cheaply and quickly than Claymont because it will only require a single platform on the south side of the tracks.
- Build housing around existing stations.
  - One way to alleviate both the housing shortage crisis and the climate crisis is to build as many residential units as possible around mass transit stations.
  - Currently, too many of Delaware's train stations are surrounded by empty fields and parking lots. Thankfully, change is in the works, but more can be done.
  - Build partnerships to supercharge ridership by building thousands of additional residential housing units around existing stations, *especially* Claymont.
- Improve our sector of the Northeast Corridor.
  - Train delays are almost always because of poor infrastructure.
  - The last two-track bottleneck on the Northeast Corridor between Delaware and New York City is just north of Wilmington and will require billions in upgrades to add a third (and hopefully fourth) track. **This project is urgent and must be a priority.**
  - Delaware should fund its railroads proportionally to its highways, thus opening access to even more matching federal funding for major rail infrastructure projects.
- Purchase trains for express service to Philadelphia.
  - Commuters are yearning for faster transit options. By starting its own commuter rail service, Delaware will immediately absorb a significant number of travelers riding on the Northeast Corridor between stations in Delaware and Philadelphia.
  - With just three or four trains, Delaware can run hourly express service to/from Philadelphia, and by skipping stops in Delaware County can cut travel times in half.
  - **Operating our own passenger trains on the Northeast Corridor sooner rather than later is the first step to expanding rail transit downstate. We will need trained crews, engineers, and mechanics to do the job!**

New Train Service

One of the most exciting projects to come to Delaware in years is the potential Diamond State Line through central Delaware that would connect to the Northeast Corridor. Service would continue south through Dover, central Delaware, and into Maryland. The project is in the study phase, but as Governor, I will work with local and federal officials to bring this transformative investment to Delaware, and we will work with passion to develop passenger service that connects New Castle County and Kent County with our beach areas. Imagine if you and family could bring your bikes on the train to the beach, and then ride from the train station to the beach. With $16 billion in federal Bipartisan Infrastructure Act funds earmarked for the Northeast Corridor, establishing new connections with America's busiest rail line will reap even more rewards for the people of Delaware.

We will not only focus on the rail network within Delaware. More robust train service to Philadelphia and particularly Philadelphia International Airport would be transformative to Wilmington and to Claymont. Imagine if the fastest way to catch your plane out of Philadelphia was to park in Claymont and take a train to the airport.[24]

None of this is easy, fast, or cheap. If it was, it likely would have been done long ago. We will provide the leadership to invest in transformative, quality rail service for Delawareans.[25]

Transit and Smart Growth

By 2050, Delaware is expected to grow by another 115,000 residents, or more than the current population of Wilmington and Newark combined.[26] Without a stronger, more convenient transit system in place, those new residents are going to be make most of their trips—to work, for shopping and entertainment, and to visit friends—by car. This will mean an even worse traffic situation in Delaware than we have currently, and even more greenhouse gas emissions. Better transit service will be essential for Sussex County, where most of this new growth is set to take place.



Transit investments can be used to guide new growth in a smart, sustainable way. Delawareans are concerned about runaway sprawl consuming our state's natural open spaces and farmland. But smart growth, where new mixed-use development is concentrated along transit corridors, can contain sprawl and give residents an alternative to the car.

A great example of how transit investments can bring new development and revitalization to Delaware communities is the new Claymont Regional Transportation Center. Built with $90 million in state and federal funds, the new station will serve as a rail and bus hub for the surrounding communities, replacing the century-old station. Moving the station to the north will spur the redevelopment of an old steel mill into a 3.3 million-square-foot mixed-use development, with seven office buildings, three industrial buildings, six retail buildings, 1,207 homes, and potentially a park along the Delaware River.

Delaware's program for tying new development to transportation infrastructure upgrades does not do enough to improve transit service or plan for new service. The Transportation Improvement District program coordinates plans for growth with necessary transportation improvements, most often to the street network. It is a partnership between local governments, DelDOT, and private developers. Developer fees cover a portion of the cost of transportation improvements. But transit improvements are an afterthought. As Governor, I will revamp the program to create funding streams for necessary transit improvements. Increased tax revenue from new developments can be used to leverage bonds that can pay for transit projects and infrastructure.

For this vision to be successful, we need transit service that is convenient. Service needs to be frequent, reliable, and safe. In Delaware today, we do not offer service that is convenient enough for residents to make transit their preferred choice. Currently, DART is undergoing a public consultation process and study called "DART Reimagined", in which the transit agency will identify opportunities to reconfigure the bus network and future service "to provide a more sustainable and equitable statewide transit system."[27]

We can expand access to transit by making it more affordable to those with limited means. While reduced fares are available to seniors and those with a disability, as Governor I would pilot a reduced fares program for those with very low incomes that need transit to get to school or to work.

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MEYER

DEMOCRAT FOR GOVERNOR

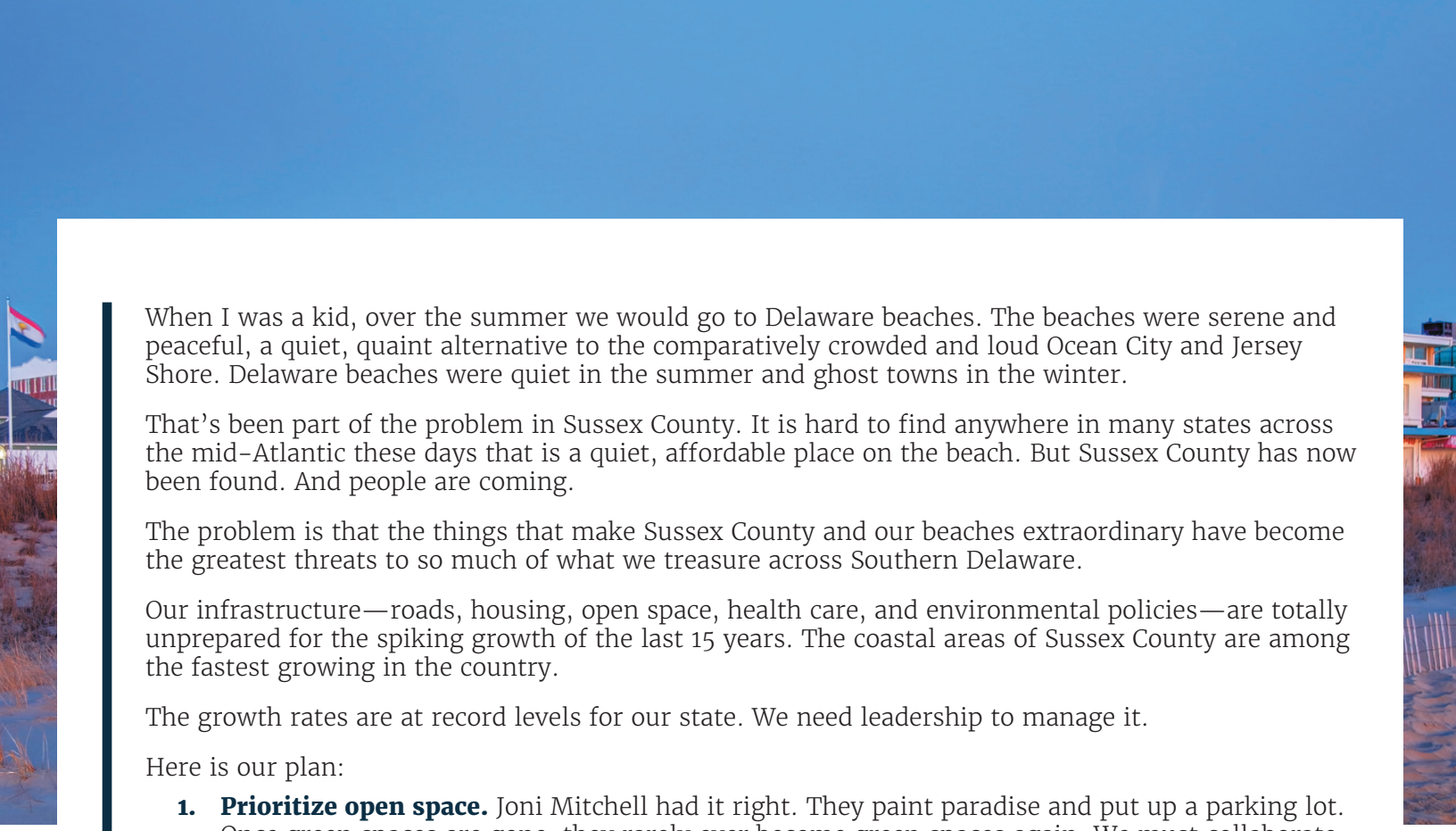






MATT MEYER'S GETTING THINGS DONE

Focus on Sussex



When I was a kid, over the summer we would go to Delaware beaches. The beaches were serene and peaceful, a quiet, quaint alternative to the comparatively crowded and loud Ocean City and Jersey Shore. Delaware beaches were quiet in the summer and ghost towns in the winter.

That's been part of the problem in Sussex County. It is hard to find anywhere in many states across the mid-Atlantic these days that is a quiet, affordable place on the beach. But Sussex County has now been found. And people are coming.

The problem is that the things that make Sussex County and our beaches extraordinary have become the greatest threats to so much of what we treasure across Southern Delaware.

Our infrastructure—roads, housing, open space, health care, and environmental policies—are totally unprepared for the spiking growth of the last 15 years. The coastal areas of Sussex County are among the fastest growing in the country.

The growth rates are at record levels for our state. We need leadership to manage it.

Here is our plan:

1. **Prioritize open space.** Joni Mitchell had it right. They paint paradise and put up a parking lot. Once green spaces are gone, they rarely ever become green spaces again. We must collaborate with county and municipal governments to enforce existing law and expand policies and funding so the beautiful green spaces in our community are not a thing of the past.
2. **Plan for managed growth.** There must be greater collaboration between the Office of State Planning and local jurisdictions to both limit growth and charge developers for the cost of growth. Whether schools or roads, sewers or public safety, those seeking profits from additional building must pay the fair cost of the additional burdens created by growth.
3. **Health care.** We will invest to address the urgent need for healthcare providers in Sussex County. Demand for healthcare services are at record highs, and we are not training or retaining the doctors, nurses, and other personnel who we need most. In this policy, we design a roadmap to improve the accessibility and affordability of basic care for Sussex County residents.
4. **Climate resiliency** As the lowest lying region of the lowest lying state in the country, Sussex County is particularly vulnerable to large swings in our climate. According to climate resiliency data, sea level rising projections show that nearly 82% of existing buildings located to the west of Route 1 in the town of Fenwick Island will be inundated twice per day by rising tides and 43% of all roadways will be inundated during high tide by the year 2080.[1] Flooding, rainfall intensities, and projected rises in sea levels are expected to drastically impact the town of South Bethany as well. We have an obligation to future generations to take action now. Delaware's future is tied closely to how well we protect our state against climate change and seize the initiative in clean and sustainable industries. These have been central to my work as County Executive and will be central to my policies as Governor—and it is Sussex County that stands to benefit the most from these efforts to promote offshore wind energy, the blue economy, biofuels, and sustainable agriculture.
5. **Traffic.** A couple of decades ago gridlock in our beach communities was unheard of. Today it is commonplace, especially in the beach areas at summertime. The current situation is not acceptable and, without serious action, will only get worse. We will invest in Sussex County infrastructure, including traffic light technology, to get the traffic moving, as well as DART

and alternatives to cars, such as rail and cycling, to provide safe, sustainable alternatives to automobiles.And that's how we're going to address an education system that is ranked 46th nationally, with a majority of students unable to achieve state standards in English or math.

6. **Economic growth.** Our economic strategy focuses on enabling small businesses to grow—particularly craft businesses and family farms that too often have felt left behind and forgotten by Dover. I will be Delaware's first governor to have started a small business in decades, and that will shape our policies. I understand the multitude of challenges that entrepreneurs and small business owners face, and we will work to enable those businesses, particularly the family farms that are the backbone of our state's economy and community.

Jobs for Downstate

Traditionally, Delaware's economy was built on the "Four C's" of chickens, corporations, chemicals, and credit cards. As Governor, I will broaden our economic development efforts to grow high-paying jobs in other fields, to create more blue-collar jobs with good wages.

Supporting Small Business

As a small business owner, I understand the importance of small businesses in creating jobs and providing an opportunity for Delawareans to provide a better future for their families and neighbors.

In New Castle County, I started a loan fund that allows businesses to erase bad debt so that they then have easier access to win government contracts. We also started the Small Business Enterprise Program to focus on diversifying our vendor pool.

Our Craft Alcohol Production Establishment legislation makes it easier for breweries to operate in commercial retail spaces. These industries support local agriculture, boost tourism, and create skilled local jobs. I'll do the same at the state level: Dogfish Head and other craft brewery and distillery operations across our state; breweries and distilleries that use products from Delaware farms will be designated "Delaware Farm Breweries" and enjoy reduced brewery fees and higher distribution limits.

This is just one example of how we can grow craft manufacturing and the "maker economy", which consists of small-scale, small-batch manufacturers, artisans, and designers. Maker manufacturing refers to the emergence of small-scale manufacturing and design businesses. It is sometimes referred to as the artisan or craft economy. The circular economy is a manufacturing and design process in which waste is eliminated (or as near to as possible) primarily through the reuse of materials and the elimination of non-recyclable materials in the manufacturing and delivery of a product. Many businesses in the maker economy embrace the ethos of the circular economy.

Embracing maker manufacturing and the circular economy is a way for post-industrial regions to reimagine and reestablish their manufacturing sectors in a way that adheres to new social and environmental expectations from consumers. Most craft makers will always be small-scale, and that's kind of the point. But the $23 billion market capitalization of Etsy, the online marketplace of "maker" products, shows how together these businesses can have a real impact.

As Governor, I will support their businesses by:

- Providing loans and grants specifically for small scale artisans and provide support to the arts generally.
- Helping makers find spaces by supporting the development of more maker spaces and loosen regulations to allow small-scale manufacturing in more areas of the state.
- Promoting Delaware's makers through a local branding campaign and incorporate this branding in our tourism marketing
- Facilitating the creation of a comprehensive directory of local artisans.
- Supporting local craft markets.

More broadly, even in business-friendly Delaware there are many barriers facing those that want to start or grow their small business. As Governor, I will review state regulations on small businesses and eliminate or modify those that are crimping business activity without providing any kind of health, safety, or environmental benefit to the public.

Too many small businesses never get off the ground because they lack access to capital. With rising interest rates, too many innovators with great ideas but no rich uncle will never get their innovation to market.

As Governor, I will work to increase lending and access to capital in underserved areas. Last year the state legislature created the Delaware Community Investment Venture Fund Bill, which will be used to develop new financial products to serve Delawareans in low-income communities. In its first year, the Fund will have $2.5 million available, with renewal funds of $500,000 in future years. That's a good start, but we must do more. I'll take the GrowNCC fund we created in New Castle County to provide below- market rate loans to small businesses and scale this program up to the state level.

I will continue the current Edge grant program for Delaware small businesses. We will look to enhance the program with additional supports and resources beyond just a grant, with a broad range of support services and market expansion opportunities to assist Delaware's strongest small business to get bigger faster.

The federal State Small Business Credit Initiative (SSBCI) will bring $60 million to Delaware for four new programs designed to support small businesses and entrepreneurship and expand access to capital: a capital access program, a loan participation program, and two equity/venture capital programs. As Governor, I will ensure that these programs serve those communities that have historically been most excluded from access to capital.

I will also focus on strengthening the community development ecosystem within Delaware. I want to foster partnerships between Delaware's financial institutions and community development corporations and community development financial institutions to fund development projects in low-income communities.

Health Care

New growth has led to there not being enough access to adequate health care in Southern Delaware. As we learned in the COVID-19 pandemic, our healthcare systems were strained and beyond capacity. A Governor, I will work with county leadership to bring more healthcare facilities—and jobs—downstate.

Expansions at Bayhealth and Beebe Healthcare, among others, are a good first step forward. I want to link new jobs in health care with job seekers looking to increase their earnings. As we develop our healthcare infrastructure, we will also be building our health workforce skills. There is much more potential to grow medical and pharmaceutical jobs in Kent and Sussex Counties:

- A new medical school could be the catalyst for job growth in southern Delaware, and as Governor, I will create a public-private work group to explore how we can bring together the partnerships and funding necessary to create a world-class medical school to Delaware
- My plan goes beyond simply creating a medical school, however: we need to strongly advocate for expansion of residency slots in primary care and across numerous medical specialties to more immediately address the doctor shortages in Delaware, particularly in Sussex County.
- We also need to expand educational opportunities across the spectrum of medical jobs, including nurses, physicians assistants, med techs, and medical assistants

Clean Fuels Manufacturing and Distribution

Ever since Dupont opened up operations in Delaware 200 years ago, the chemicals industry has been a big part of Delaware's economy. Chemical manufacturing is the largest manufacturing industry in Delaware, generating $2 billion in economic output.[2] But like all industries, technological innovation is driving change.

Under my leadership, we can and will be energy independent. That is not just good for our environment. Generating our own power is great for our economy, as well.

Delaware has set a goal to have 40% of energy consumed in the state come from renewable sources, such as wind or solar power, by 2035. But currently, only two percent of our energy generation comes from renewable sources, ranking Delaware 49th out of 50 states.[3] This is despite Delaware being named one of the best states for rooftop solar potential.[4] One estimate is that Delaware could meet one-fifth of its energy needs through solar roof installations alone.[5]

One of the most exciting technologies under development is the production of clean hydrogen energy. Hydrogen is a clean fuel that, when consumed in a fuel cell, produces only water.[6] Expanding the use of hydrogen and the production from renewable sources could be a major breakthrough in the transition away from fossil fuels. Eventually, hydrogen could be used to power our homes. It could be the way to create low-emissions aviation and sea transport. And hydrogen could be a leading option for storing energy created through renewable sources.

Delaware is part of a regional partnership that was recently chosen by the U.S. Department of Energy to receive up to $750 million in federal funds. MACH2 is a project to develop clean hydrogen production and distribution. The project is expected to catalyze the creation and retention of more than 13,000 well-paying jobs in the low carbon economy, across Delaware, Southeast Pennsylvania, and Southern New Jersey.

As Governor, I will ensure that this partnership remains strong and stays true to its green energy goals. We will continue to be the strongest partner, and through programs in our high schools, trade schools, and universities, we will train our workforce of tomorrow to win in the regional hydrogen economy.

Delaware has a lot of catching up to do if it is to meet key sustainability goals, such as renewables generation and greenhouse gas reductions. We need new leadership and increasing momentum. As Governor, I will double our efforts to expand renewable energy generation.

The "Blue Economy"

There are opportunities for our universities to lead innovation through research into emerging fields and technologies. One example is the "blue economy" and the role of "blue technology"—technology used to understand, explore, and manage the marine environment—in creating sustainable methods and technologies that protect our oceans and waterways. The University of Delaware's College of Earth, Ocean & Environment is leading research into new "blue" technologies and received a $1.3 million grant from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. As this sector grows and matures, there will be more opportunities for marine technicians, engineers, mechanics, and electricians, for example, to find jobs in the blue economy.

One of Delaware's biggest opportunities for renewable energy generation comes from offshore wind. By harnessing wind power miles off shore, Delaware has the potential to power *nine million homes.*[7] For as long as there has been an electric grid, Delaware has imported energy. With leadership we can change that and export power to neighboring states. That is winning in the green economy of tomorrow.

Offshore wind projects are big, complicated, and require government stewardship. Any solution to unlocking wind power will require strong multi-state partnerships. Renewable energy in the mid-Atlantic is a regional issue. That's why I will continue to work with partnering states to produce and procure renewable energy as new facilities come online.

But too many of our projects to create or install renewable energy are being delayed. New solar power projects are backlogged, waiting to get connected to the grid by the region's grid operator. Local governments put up roadblocks to solar generation. As Governor, I will work with local governments to develop a state framework to guide future land use and conservation decisions. I'm encouraged by the state's new Community Solar program, and most new applications for solar have been for smaller, community solar installations. At the same time, I want to balance agricultural preservation with the siting of new solar farms. Our statewide framework will set the parameters for solar installations at both the community and utility scale.

As Governor, I will push forward on plans for new offshore wind farms in Delaware waters. Efforts dating back to 2008 have stalled, but now new momentum is gaining for projects 12-30 miles off of Delaware's shores.

Delawareans are rightly concerned about the impact of wind farm construction and operations on the natural environment and on their local communities. As Governor, I will spearhead an inclusive, community-led process to understand community concerns and develop strategies to minimize disruptions due to construction and to protect vulnerable habitats.

I will solicit the best bids for Delaware, those that create jobs in-state and provide flexibility in pricing. I will work with local communities to create a process for transmission access, to find a landing point for power cables connecting the grid with offshore turbines.

Growth That's Sustainable

The transition to a clean economy will be transformative, creating new technologies, processes, businesses, and jobs. Wind power, solar power, the weatherization of older buildings, sustainable construction techniques for new buildings, EV charging station installation and maintenance, and the introduction of high efficiency heat pumps—all of these approaches will be necessary to meet our state, national, and international greenhouse gas reduction goals. Fighting climate change will improve the lives of Delawareans by creating good-paying jobs and improving air and water quality.

That's why Delaware needs a climate champion as Governor. Delaware should be the most sustainable state in the nation. The cost of inaction is too high. Delaware is one of the most vulnerable states to rising seas and hotter summers. We must not leave the worsening climate problems of today to future generations.

Over the next 90 years, between eight and 11% of Delaware is at risk of being inundated by flooding.[8] Delaware needs a strategy to adapt to dramatic sea level rise that will include zoning changes, land acquisition programs, building restrictions, setbacks and buffers, and conservation easements.[9] As Governor, I will direct the Office of State Planning Coordination and the Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control to work with local governments on a land use plan to adapt to rising sea levels.

Planning and Open Space

Both Kent and Sussex counties are growing. In the last 10 years, Kent County has grown by 20,000 people and Sussex by 50,000. Too much of this growth has been unplanned, leading to sprawl, traffic, and the destruction of farms and natural habitats. There needs to be improved, public-driven, long-term planning. In my time as County Executive, I led the most collaborative, inclusive, and diverse process in Delaware history to draft the award-winning Comprehensive Plan. The central vision of the Plan was what do we want our community to look like in 2050. And what investments do we need to make today and tomorrow to realize that vision.

As we plan for more people and more houses, we need to ensure that growth occurs in a planned, manageable way, and in a way that promotes "smart growth" principles, such as walkability, proximity to shopping and services, preservation of natural habitat, planning for climate change, and anti-sprawl measures.



Delaware has a lower percentage of multifamily units than the nation or any surrounding state.[10] A recent report stated that Delaware has an "overabundance" of single-family homes, but not enough of other housing types, such as rowhomes, triplex apartments, and multifamily buildings.[11]

As Governor, I will coordinate planning efforts between the state and counties to identify opportunities to promote smart growth. My administration will provide planning grants to localities that wish to pursue smart growth development, as well as consider laws that provide more opportunities for affordable housing development in cities and towns.

The policies and strategies guiding statewide development are outlined in the Delaware Strategies for State Policies and Spending. The document defines the state's goals and policies for land use, infrastructure investment, and other priorities, and identifies areas of the state as one of four "investment levels". These levels indicate the appropriateness of new development and infrastructure investment.

The "Strategies" must be updated every five years, by law, and the next update is 2025. As Governor, I will ensure that the next Strategies document gives teeth to the enforcement of development guidelines to ensure that new development is discouraged in those areas least able to support it because of infrastructure or environmental concerns. This is especially important for protecting the state's floodplains, and my administration will discourage non-essential building in flood plains.

My administration will make the preservation of farmland and open spaces a priority. Last year, the state set aside $20 million for the state's Open Space Program. My goal as Governor will be to engage with the philanthropic sector, as well as to utilize funds from my comprehensive statewide efficiency review (discussed in Chapter XI), to sustain our investment in preserving farmland, environmental and community sustainability, and food security.

One of my proudest accomplishments as New Castle County Executive is the preservation and conservation of natural lands. We preserved 250 acres of farm and wildlife lands from future development, protecting water quality and conserving critical habitat. As County Executive, I was proud to announce that we received federal funds for the expansion of the Jack A. Markell Trail, connecting Wilmington to Newport, and setting the stage for the eventual 16-mile Wilmington Loop project.

This year, with the expansion of White Clay Creek Park, Delaware celebrated a milestone of 45,000 acres preserved through the Open Spaces Program since 1990. As Governor, I will push to have 50,000 acres preserved by 2032. I will provide funding for more biking and hiking trails throughout the state, to promote alternative transportation and motorless connectivity.

Investing in Needed Economic Infrastructure.

In Kent County, the Dover Air Force Base is an opportunity to attract logistics firms and workers downstate. But infrastructure is a barrier to growth. In fact, economic growth in southern Delaware overall is constrained by outdated infrastructure such as our roads, bridges, energy distribution systems, ports, and broadband. As Governor, I will ensure that we prioritize upgrades to highways and roads to ensure that new businesses are not ensnarled in traffic. I will prioritize critical investment in our infrastructure in order to catalyze economic growth, create more jobs, and boost our exports. I will make sure we invest in:

- **Broadband** – Broadband access and connectivity are essential for businesses and residents to participate in today's economy. Delaware is expected to receive over $100 million to bring internet to all Delawareans under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. Our priority will be to continue the work of the Carney Administration, connecting underserved and rural areas first, on our way to becoming the first fully-connected state in the nation.
- **Human Capital** – A shocking 36.5% of Sussex County adults can't read beyond a 3rd-grade level. We won't be able to attract the kind of jobs we want for all without ensuring that all Delawareans have mastered basic employability skills. I have issued a detailed plan for education in our state that has been called the most comprehensive in history. Third grade reading levels are particularly important because children who can't read well by that grade are four times more likely to drop out of school than their peers who can read proficiently.[12].



The Seaford School District is the only high-poverty district in Delaware where, in 2022, students finished third grade above standards on the Smarter Balanced exam and then, as fourth graders in 2023, grew more than a full academic year. How did they do it? By following the science of reading and creating consistency across all aspects of teaching and learning—using high-quality curricula matched to student assessments, and training teachers in how to use both well. They combine grade-level reading and writing into one daily block that sticks to grade-level texts, even for students who are behind, providing supportive instruction where needed. To help students who might be struggling with grade-level text, a teacher and the entire class read the text aloud together, a technique known as choral reading, with a clear focus.[13]

Unfortunately, this is true for our entire state. On the 2019 National Assessment for Educational Progress (NAEP), Delaware scored in the middle of the pack in elementary reading achievement.[14]

MEYER
DEMOCRAT FOR GOVERNOR

But the percentage of third graders reading proficiently slipped by three percentage points between 2015 and 2019.[15] This only grew worse during the pandemic; by the 2021 test, 58% of Delaware students scored below or well below "basic."

Delaware has made progress in this area: teacher preparation programs have implemented scientifically-based reading instruction. The state mandates research and evidence-based instructional practices and components in teacher preparation program curriculum—but the mandate remains general and does not specify other parameters for literacy instruction. Delaware still has no pre-service certification exam focused on the science of reading. Current exams for teacher certification required in Delaware are too broad to accurately assess a pre-service teaching candidate's understanding of the science of reading. Additionally, there is no state certificate offered to pre-service, early career, or experienced teachers on the science of reading. In 2019, the Delaware Department of Education released a literacy plan to address Delaware's literacy challenges—but it does not address the underlying policies that could help the state make additional progress.[16]

As Governor, I will:

- Embed scientifically-based reading instruction in school curricula and hold programs accountable for literacy outcomes.
- Include scientifically-based reading instruction in the teacher certification process, specifically for elementary school certification. By 2015, 14 states required some form of a reading instruction assessment for teacher certification.[17] Delaware should join them
- Require pre-service teachers seeking certification to pass a Foundations of Reading assessment, as states like Ohio, Arkansas, and Connecticut do.[18]

- **Workforce Training –** As we think about training for the jobs of tomorrow, it must include vocational training and training to support and protect good union jobs. In New Castle County, we launched a program with local union laborers and the state Department of Labor to train unskilled young adults for good union jobs. The program has now trained over 100 women and men, almost all Delawareans of color, many of whom are returning citizens coming out of the criminal justice system. As Governor, I will bring enhanced job training programs to Sussex County, including:
  - Supporting registered apprenticeship programs.
  - Working to connect skilled labor with high-quality jobs.
  - Customized workforce training for companies looking to hire skilled workers immediately through a proactive rapid response program.
  - Continuing to develop programs for non-traditional students, such as the formerly incarcerated and people older than 25, with options beyond high school that award post-secondary credentials.
  - Supporting and expanding workforce development programs.
  - Supporting earned credits for adult learners seeking secondary degrees at state schools.
  - Investing in expanded training opportunities in avionics at Delaware Coastal Airport and in collaboration with Delaware State University's award-winning Aviation Program. According to the International Civil Aviation Organization, the aviation industry will need 480,000 new technicians to maintain aircraft and over 350,000 pilots by 2026. This labor shortage is causing flight delays, passenger inconvenience, and higher prices across the country.[19] With the facilities and the talent that we already have, this is a tremendous opportunity for Delaware to serve as a training ground for the world of flight, while creating substantial career opportunities in underserved areas across Wilmington and our state.

- **Improving Our Roads –** Traffic congestion is also negatively affecting our quality of life. Poor planning has led to sprawl, generating more traffic and longer trips. In the summer beach traffic overwhelms coastal communities. Only six other states have worse congestion.[20] We need to implement strategies that allow traffic to flow more efficiently.



Delaware was recently dubbed the "3rd worst state to drive in."[21] And while state rankings like these should always be taken with a grain of salt, when you talk to Delawareans, they will tell you about their frustrations with traffic congestion and pothole-riddled roads.

An important step to improving congestion in Sussex County is the Coastal Corridors study, which is considering improvements to Route 16 and Routes 404/9, to improve east-west traffic to points on the shore. Other improvements that will be a priority for my administration will be:

  - Resiliency upgrades for SR1, to protect against floodingWorking to connect skilled labor with high-quality jobs.
  - Improvements to US 113—to create the first north-south limited access highway in Delaware.
  - Improvements for freight and trucks on east-west corridors through Kent County.

- **Transit and Smart Growth –** By 2050, Delaware is expected to grow by another 115,000 residents, or more than the current population of Wilmington and Newark combined.[22] Without a stronger, more convenient transit system in place, those new residents are going to be make most of their trips—to work, for shopping and entertainment, and to visit friends—by car. This will mean an even worse traffic situation in Delaware than we have currently. Better transit service will be essential for Sussex County, where most of this new growth is set to take place.

Transit investments can be used to guide new growth in a smart, sustainable way. Delawareans are concerned about runaway sprawl consuming our state's natural open spaces and farmland. But smart growth, where new mixed-use development is concentrated along transit corridors, can contain sprawl and give residents an alternative to the car.

- I am excited about plans to bring rail service down the Delmarva Peninsula, and will work to bring passenger trains to Dover, Harrington, and beyond
- Delaware's program for tying new development to transportation infrastructure upgrades does not do enough to improve transit service or plan for new service. The Transportation Improvement District program coordinates plans for growth with necessary transportation

improvements, most often to the street network. It is a partnership between local governments, DelDOT, and private developers. Developer fees cover a portion of the cost of transportation improvements. But transit improvements are an afterthought. As Governor, I will revamp the program to create funding streams for necessary transit improvements. Increased tax revenue from new developments can be used to leverage bonds that can pay for transit projects and infrastructure.

Farmland and Open Space Preservation

The Delaware farm family has long been the backbone of our state's economy. But it's actually more important than that. The Delaware farm family is integral to the fabric of our state. For so many Delawareans, farming is less a job than it is a lifestyle. And too many farm families are being left behind. They are left behind by an increasingly high tech and changing farm economy that too often favors big ag over family ag. And they are left behind by policymaking and resource allocation in Dover. We will work to deliver for farm families across our state.

Preservation of farmland is important for the people of Delaware in order to maintain the rural character of much of the state, to prevent expansive sprawl, and to promote the agricultural sector in Delaware, estimated to be worth $9 billion in economic activity a year.

But Delaware farmland faces significant challenges: the American Farmland Trust predicts that Delawareans will pave over or develop over 65,100 acres between 2016 and 2040—the equivalent of 300 farms or $182 million of farm output. Eighty-nine percent of that conversion will occur on Delaware's best, most productive land.

The Delaware Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation has been a critical tool to preserving farmland and forested land in Delaware over the past three decades. The Foundation now oversees the permanent preservation of over 150,000 acres of Delaware farmland. Delaware's statewide program has preserved 22.6% of New Castle County, 41.9% of Kent County, and 21.7% of Sussex County farmland.

As Governor, I will work to:

- Enhance support for the AgLands Preservation Program. Continuing to preserve the land-base for production agriculture is critical to the future of crop and livestock production and the preservation of profitable farming.
- Go further by increasing the funds available for preservation districts and easements and by increasing the value of land easements offered by the Department of Agriculture.
- Enact transferrable tax credits.
- Authorize cover crop insurance rebates for farmers who utilize best practices in cover crop adoption.
- Provide matching incentives to county governments to create, enhance, and expedite farmland preservation.

Growing the Agricultural Economy

Forty-three percent of the total land mass of Delaware lies in farms, or 522,834 acres. This represents open space that supports not only Delaware's agricultural production, but also our environment, wildlife, and quality of life for all Delawareans. The market value of the land and buildings on those farms is $2.3 billion dollars, which represents a per acre value of $9,518. The equity assets associated with Delaware's farmers and agribusiness is a major economic pillar for Delaware's economy.



In 2022, the market value of all crops, broiler chickens, milk, and other livestock products was over $2 billion. Economic studies conducted in Delawavre and other states over the past four decades continue to confirm a multiplier of crop and livestock value of seven to eight—in other words, the economic impact of agricultural production in Delaware probably contributes roughly $16 billion to the state's economy. That makes Delaware agriculture a significant employer.

Employment on farms, poultry processing plants, ag service firms, vegetable processing plants, transportation services, and allied industries generate between 20,000 and 25,000 jobs annually. As Governor, I will:

- Review regulations related to food and spirits production to enable a farm-to-table economy in Delaware.
- Create incentives for Delaware food and spirits producers to use local farm produce. A Farm Distillery program, for example, could make it easier to open a new distillery, brewery, or winery as long as they primarily use Delaware state food products as ingredients.
- Allow farmers to claim state income tax credits to offset their local property tax bills, as Michigan, New York, and Wisconsin do (and Iowa and New York offer a credit against school taxes on agricultural land).
- Make Delaware's Nutrient Management Commission a leading coordinating agency in support of poultry- and crop-related nutrient management and water quality issues, and the University of Delaware College of Agricultural Sciences a partner with the industry and the State in addressing these issues. The broiler industry is key to Delaware agriculture, indeed to agriculture on the Delmarva Peninsula. In Delaware, the broiler, corn, and soybean complex generates nearly 75% of Delaware's farm income. Delaware has 551 broiler producers, generating annual production of 250 million birds. Nearly 600 million birds are produced annually on the Delmarva Peninsula.
- Cooperate with the College of Agricultural Science & Natural Resources at the University of Delaware as well as private sector technology providers to support science-based practices that enhance production of corn and soybean—major sources of farm income.
- Support agricultural education & research at all levels. The research and undergraduate education roles at the College of Agriculture & Natural Sources at the University of Delaware and the College of Agriculture at Delaware State University will continue to be supported. Cooperative extension programs to bring the new knowledge to the people from

both institutions will be recognized and supported. In addition, agricultural education programs at Delaware Technical and Community College along with those at the Vocational Agriculture and Future Farmers of American Programs in Delaware's middle and high schools will be supported.

- Work with the USDA, the General Assembly, and Delaware Farm Organizations to develop crop insurance coverages for certain crops not currently covered.
- Work with farmers and wildlife biologists to study how to reduce crop loss due to deer damage. Conservative estimates of the crop loss reach $20 million.
- Work with the State's universities and the vegetable, fruit, and ornamental crop industries to enhance the competitive position of those industries, identify new enterprise opportunities, and to ensure proper, fair regulation.
- Direct my Secretaries of Agriculture, DNREC, and Transportation to meet with the Delaware Farm Bureau to identify priorities and rank issues. I will meet personally and regularly with farmers to maintain constant communication on the issues of greatest importance to agriculture in our state.

Improving Nutrition Across-the-Board

Over one-quarter of Delaware residents live in areas with just one grocery store, while over three in five live without easy access to even one.[23] The consequences of food deserts include:[24]

- Poor diet and nutrition.
- Increased risk of obesity and health related issues.
- Limited access to fresh produce

As Governor, I will address issues of nutrition and food deserts holistically, through:

- **Tax Incentives.** We will provide incentives for grocery stores to build in low-access areas..
- **Increasing Engagement with Food Educators in our Schools**. Our school programs provide food, which is great, but engagement between our students and food educators increases the likelihood of changing attitudes and behaviors more permanently. We will collaborate to expand Healthy Foods for Healthy Kids across Delaware, enabling every Delaware child to garden at school. A 21st century education system teaches the science of agriculture and nutrition while growing a healthy and scrumptious lunch.
- **SNAP and WIC in Farmers Markets.** I will ensure that all our farmers markets get qualified to accept SNAP and WIC.
- **Community Supported Agriculture.** I will promote the use of Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), which are programs that foster a relationship between community members and farms by "allowing community members to buy shares of produce at the beginning of the season in turn for regularly supplied boxes of mixed produce from the local farm."[26] Studies on CSAs show that they help improve health outcomes and food behaviors.
- **Incentivizing Healthier Business Models**. I will create incentives for small food retailers to adopt healthier business models, by minimizing regulatory and administrative burdens, simplifying the permitting and licensing pvrocess, and offering tax abatements for property improvements in designated districts or census tract areas.[27]
- **Putting Healthy Foods in Discount Stores.** I will require corner and discount dollar stores to carry certain healthy food items through business licensing laws.

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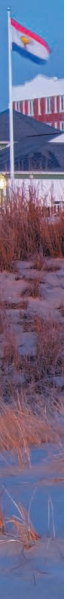


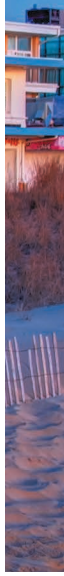




MATT MEYER'S GETTING THINGS DONE

A Safe & Just Society





While I was a teacher in the Wilmington public schools, shots would often ring out in the evenings and at night. My students were too often the victims, even when they were nowhere near the shooting.

One evening, there was a memorial for the father of one of my students. We all watched as my student, Jason, crumbled at his mom's feet. His dad was gone and one of my top math students was suddenly so cruelly alone.

Another morning, Eric, one of the best sixth grade math students I had ever taught, was unusually disrespectful and oppositional. It turned out that the prior evening a 16-year-old boy suffering from a gunshot had stumbled onto Eric's front yard, collapsed, and died.

Early one morning, I walked into school eager to start the day. Everyone appeared distraught, crying, from the principal to the school aides and secretaries. D'Andre Green had been a student at our school. He was shot dead a few days earlier, an innocent bystander outside a community center.

Things have not changed enough since I taught ten years ago. **There is no excuse for gun violence in an advanced society.** We must work tirelessly to provide substantive and meaningful solutions to eradicate gun violence from every community in Delaware. Jason, Eric, D'Andre, and countless others deserve different futures.

Every Delawarean deserves the fundamental right to live in a community where safety and security are intrinsic. As County Executive of the most populous county in Delaware, I've worked tirelessly to create and maintain environments where families can thrive without fear.

As Governor of Delaware, I will be devoted to making this a reality for all Delawareans, to make our state more equitable and more just. Here's my plan for doing that.

Thanks for reading,

Matt

The Meyer Record

I take public safety seriously. As Governor, on Day One, I will have more public safety experience than any other governor elected in Delaware in generations—having managed our state's second-largest police agency, largest paramedic service, and 911 center; funded New Castle County's 19 fire companies; and served as a U.S. diplomat for a year embedded with the U.S. Army in a foreign war.

Since my election as County Executive in 2016, we have created safer communities. Recognizing the importance of proactive measures, we solved every homicide case in our jurisdiction in 2018—a rare 100% homicide clearance rate. Overall crime in New Castle County has decreased 7.5% since 2016. Our targeted efforts resulted in a 44% decrease in shootings, a 19% decrease in robberies, and an 18% decrease in burglaries.

How did we do this?

We created the first behavioral health unit of any of Delaware's 49 police agencies, diverting thousands of Delawareans from arrest and incarceration into treatment. We prioritized collaboration between the police department and mental health and substance use disorder professionals. Our goal was to ensure that individuals facing mental health challenges and addiction receive the treatment and care they desperately need rather than being entangled in the criminal justice system. We must continue to take steps across our state toward a compassionate and effective approach to public safety.

Our administration made unprecedented investments and advancements to address emergency services and public health. In our county police's Behavioral Health Unit, professional counselors team up with officers to respond to mental health crises.

Through the Hero Help program, which we funded for the first time during my administration, we diverted residents experiencing substance use disorder to treatment instead of arrest and incarceration, screening 245 individuals to date. Additionally, we established a partnership that supplied 760 doses of lifesaving Narcan to 21 volunteer fire companies. Shortly after starting this program, the state saw the benefit and supplied all fire companies in the state with Narcan.

Recognizing the evolving emergency response landscape, we implemented a Text 2 911 service, allowing citizens to communicate with emergency services through text messages. Additionally, our record-breaking paramedic and first responder efforts have revived hundreds of cardiac arrest victims in my time in office. That means the victim's heart was not beating when the paramedics arrived and the individual later walked out of the hospital with normal brain function after treatment. For those football fans that may remember Damar Hamlin, there is a Damar Hamlin who survives in New Castle County every few days.

Additionally, we were among the first counties in the country to introduce a 911 feature that allows 911 callers to share video with dispatchers during emergencies. This innovation enhances public safety by providing first responders with visual information for immediate incident assessment—ultimately significantly improving emergency responses and potentially saving critical minutes in urgent situations.[1]

Our commitment to public safety extends to technological innovations such as the RAVE Panic Button, deployed in 271 schools, businesses, and other facilities, enhancing readiness for active shooter or natural disaster events. The free PulsePoint smartphone app, downloaded 3,200 times to date, directs citizen responders to locations where CPR is needed.

Ensuring swift response times, we dramatically increased the percentage of 911 calls answered in 10 seconds or less from 60.2% in 2016 to an impressive 92.7% today, surpassing the national standard of 90%.

In the wake of public outcry over the death of Lymond Moses, I was the first elected official to require

any police agency in Delaware to quickly release body-worn camera video—first to the victim and the victim's family and then, with the consent of the victim or family, to the general public. We also recently launched the first Police Accountability Board in Delaware. This initiative marks a significant step forward in ensuring law enforcement agencies are accountable to their communities, fostering trust and transparency.

I am proud to have named the first African American police chief and chief administrative officer in NCC history. This honor reflects our commitment to diversity and inclusivity in leadership roles, particularly in public safety. Together, these accomplishments represent our unwavering dedication to creating a safer, healthier, and more compassionate community for all.

Racial injustice results in inequitable outcomes in all areas—economic, education, health, and more. I am committed to creating policies that promote equity for *all* Delawareans.

My track record demonstrates a dedication to building a Delaware where everyone feels valued and welcomed regardless of background. One of my proudest achievements is establishing the most diverse senior staff in our county's history. By assembling a team that represents the richness of our community, we are better equipped to address our residents' diverse needs and perspectives. I have championed progressive policies to make New Castle County a place where immigrants can thrive. It is essential that we create inclusive communities where everyone feels secure and valued. I have consistently taken official actions to ensure inclusivity across various dimensions, such as race, ethnicity, immigration status, sexual orientation, gender, and gender identity.

While much progress has been made, there is still much work to be done. **It is vitally important that every Delawarean knows that anyone who commits a crime will be brought to justice.**

Cracking Down on Violent Crime

Violent crime in Delaware used to be significantly higher than the U.S. rate. As of 2022, however, it has fallen to roughly the same as the rate of the U.S. (383.5 [Delaware] versus 380.7 [U.S.] per 100,000 people per year). This is good progress, but more work must be done. Especially when it comes to domestic violence, violence in schools, human trafficking, drunk driving, and guns.



Targeting Gun Violence

Gun deaths reached record levels two years ago before our state government finally overruled decades of objections by gun supporters, like my opponent, and enacted a comprehensive gun-control package. This was a step forward, but according to the Giffords Law Center, Delaware only earned a grade of "B+" regarding gun safety regulations. There's more we can do:

- **Restrict gun store expansion.** As County Executive, I've been working to restrict where future gun stores can be located. Under new legislation we're enacting this year, gun stores will not be permitted within 500 feet of residential areas; 1,000 feet of schools, daycares, or government parks; or 1,500 feet of another gun store. As Governor, I will enact such limitations statewide.

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- **Fill in the gaps in state gun laws.** The recent gun control legislation in our state is a start. However, many important regulations on lethal weapons remain unadopted in Delaware. As Governor, I will work to:
  - Outlaw concealed carry in bars.
  - Ban open carry altogether.
  - Proactively remove and buy back weapons from those who have become legally ineligible to carry a weapon.
  - Enact a state waiting period for gun purchases.
- **Invest in analysis of state-of-the-art technologies to stop crime and fund the ones that are most effective and equitable.**
- **Strengthen the state's relationship with federal law enforcement and expedite the prosecution of gun possession and other gun-related crimes.** The Biden Administration has directed the federal Department of Justice to increase collaboration with local jurisdictions to combat illegal guns and to focus on repeat offenders and those that use guns in drug-related crimes. I will direct state officials to find every opportunity to work directly with President Biden and our U.S. Attorney and engage in the DOJ's Project Safe Neighborhoods initiative.
- Invest in community-based and hospital-based violence intervention programs.
- **Require that all guns sold in our state have childproofing features,** as neighboring Maryland already does.
- **Expand gun buybacks.** Delaware instituted a gun buyback for high-capacity magazines when we enacted a ban on these types of weapons two years ago. We need to make buybacks an ongoing effort and include not just high-capacity weapons and other illegal guns, but all firearms that people may recognize actually decrease the safety of their own families and communities and want off the streets. We must make a particular effort to buy back guns from people who lose their right to carry weapons because of domestic violence offenses, protection-from-abuse orders, or other violations.
- **Hold gun traffickers strictly liable for the results.** In our neighboring state of New Jersey, a new law holds unlicensed gun sellers liable if a gun sourced from the seller is involved in a crime. Gun traffickers who sell weapons linked to a slaying could face up to 20 years in prison. The law exempts licensed firearm dealers who properly comply with all regulations.[2]

Domestic Violence

Nationally, one in three women and one in four men are victims of intimate partner physical violence, sexual violence, or stalking in their lifetimes. Here in Delaware, 38% of women and 33% of men are victims of domestic violence.

As Governor, I will work closely with the Domestic Violence Coordinating Council[3] to support their efforts for preventative and responsive measures regarding domestic and intimate partner violence. We understand that the COVID-19 pandemic was devastating to individuals across our community, as partner violence spiked. We will continue to collaborate with and support partners, such as Child Inc.,the YWCA, Amenecer, the Delaware Center for Justice, and others as they work on the front lines to protect some of Delaware's most vulnerable.

Violence in Schools

When Delawareans send their children to school daily, they must be completely confident that their loved ones are safe.

School should be a place where our students learn and thrive. However, in the last school year, Delaware schools experienced eight gun incidents, more than double any year in the past five years, and there were nearly 800 school crimes—the most since 2017.[4]



The state recently launched The New School Safety and Wellness Suite, which "incorporates a comprehensive approach to alert administrators of serious situations while providing students with the necessary tools and resources to prevent or deter a situation from escalating." This includes:[5]

- SAFE DE, an anonymous reporting app that provides access to crisis texting, mental health education, and other resources.
- Comprehensive School Safety Program, which standardizes safety protocols for students and staff across the state.
- Case management systems, which store and track critical student information.

As Governor, I will further these efforts by making sure that every school in the state adopts this safety plan. Ensuring full cooperation will increase unity and fortify our commitment to creating a secure and supportive environment for every student and staff member across the state.

Human Trafficking

Delaware had the 10th most human trafficking cases per capita in the country in 2021.[6] This is partially due to the state's proximity to I-95, which passes through 15 states, providing a convenient path for traffickers to transport individuals.[7] But, while human trafficking has been a federal offense since 2000, there was no state legislation in Delaware until 2014;[8] it wasn't until 2022 that Attorney General Kathy Jennings launched the Delaware Department of Justice's first dedicated Human Trafficking Unit.[9] Thus, if criminals did not want to be prosecuted for trafficking, they would go to the area where the least amount of prosecution was happening—Delaware. Shared Hope International Institute for Justice & Advocacy conducted an analysis of where Delaware stands in comparison to best practice policies regarding child & youth sex trafficking and found us lacking in numerous areas.[10]

There still is no coordinated system in the state to track and share data on individuals involved in human trafficking. The data collected varies based on the agency or non-profit that the individual is interfacing with. It is estimated that "official tracking numbers represent as little as 14 percent and at most 45 percent of potential total trafficking victims."[11]

As Governor, I will standardize a reporting system among agencies and organizations that interface with individuals being trafficked. Having a standardized system will help us understand the breadth of this horrible situation. I will also work to develop and standardize comprehensive training to help our safety agencies identify, protect, and support potential, current, and past victims. I also will:

- Enact comprehensive Safe Harbor laws prohibiting the criminalization, arrest, and prosecution of minors for prostitution offenses, as well as for other (non-violent) offenses committed as a result of their sex-trafficking victimization.

- Facilitate access to funding for community-based services so that survivors are connected to necessary resources.
- Coordinate access to specialized services for victims, removing any unnecessary barriers.
- Mandate child welfare agencies and juvenile justice agencies to conduct trauma-informed commercial sexual exploitation (CSEC) screening for children at risk of sex trafficking.
- Provide adequate funding for CSEC services and non-governmental organizations.
- Authorize victims to pursue and receive *ex parte* civil protection orders.
- Statutorily exempt victims of sex trafficking and CSEC from ineligibility factors for crime victim's compensation.

Drugs and Opioids

Over the last decade, policymakers, politicians, health professionals, and communities have come together to tackle the epidemic that is opioid abuse. The loss of life has plagued our communities largely due to the synthetic opioid fentanyl, which is 50 times stronger than heroin and 100 times stronger than morphine.[12]

Since my election in 2016, I have seen Delaware go through some of its hardest times.

- According to data from the Delaware Health Statistics Center (DHSC), the drug overdose death count in Delaware increased an average of 18% every year from 2012 to 2020.[13]
- In 2021, Delaware was ranked #5 in the country in drug overdose mortality.[14]
- In 2022, we experienced the most yearly fatal overdoses on record—at least 537 Delawareans died from drug overdoses—with the majority involving fentanyl.[15]

The opioid crisis is only growing worse:

- The Delaware Division of Substance Abuse and Mental Health also found that the number of Black Delawareans dying from drug overdose rose by 21% from 2021 and 2022.[16]
- Older Delawareans are overdosing: in 2021, the age group with the largest number of fatal overdoses was between 31 and 40 years of age. In 2022, the highest rate was for individuals between 51 and 60.
- Xylazine, an animal tranquilizer, "is becoming increasingly used in conjunction with opioids in Delaware and surrounding areas. In Philadelphia, 90% of street opioid samples were found to contain xylazine."[17] Similarly, in Maryland, xylazine was found in almost 80% of drug samples between 2021 and 2022 that contained opioids.[18] Since xylazine is not an opiate, it does not respond to drugs like naloxone, an overdose reversal drug.

As Governor, I will do everything in my power to create the best team and plan possible to create preventative, responsive strategies that save lives. I will:

- Impose stronger regulations on opioid prescribing. In 2017, Delaware ranked first in the nation for the rate at which doctors prescribe certain high-dose opioids, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The top one percent of prescribers wrote 25% of all opioid prescriptions in the state.[19]
- Increase access to xylazine testing strips and remain at the forefront of research about this growing threat.
- Fund and expand resources for historically marginalized communities and address those being affected by this epidemic at the highest rates.

- Increase the use of drug courts.
- Institute and fund community interventions wherever appropriate.

I will also follow the recommendations of the June 2022 study by the HMA Institute on Addiction, *Delaware Substance Use Disorder Treatment System Needs Assessment:*[20]

- Decrease deaths by a) making sure every law enforcement officer in the state has access to Narcan (naloxone) and training on how to use it, and b) providing access and funding to syringe service providers in the overdose epicenter of each county.
- Improve resources for those in the justice system by a) reviewing and increasing the quality of medication-assisted Substance Use Disorder ("SUD") services in correctional facilities and b) improving and expanding re-entry programs by providing them with stable and increased state funding.
- Increase reimbursement rates for outpatient, residential, and withdrawal management and be regionally competitive, at a minimum.
- Increase education on a) appropriate treatment of pain, b) anti-stigma campaign on SUD, c) evidence-based interventions for opioid use, and d) SUD prevention for youth.
- Increase capacity for and access to evidence-based treatment for adolescents, including medication assistance. This study estimates that 564 adolescents needed opioid use disorder care in 2020, and only 17 received it.
- Establish competencies required for each type of provider at each level of care for proficiency in substance use disorders.
- Choose consistent state-wide tools for screening and assessing SUD cases.

Drunk Driving

Drunk driving deaths are at an all-time high in the United States, with one person being killed every 39 minutes from drunk driving.[21] Delaware is not exempt from this challenge. In fact, in 2019, Delaware surpassed the U.S. average for alcohol-impaired driving fatalities.[22] The percent of alcohol-impaired driving fatalities involving high-BAC drivers (.15+) was over 12% higher in Delaware (83.3%) than the national average (70.7%).[23] In 2020, 65% of drivers involved in serious injury or fatal crashes tested positive for at least one drug,[24] while, in 2022, alcohol was involved in 27% of fatal crashes.[25]

Every drunk driving accident is preventable. As Governor, I will:

- Increase high-visibility patrols during the times of day and days of the week when the most crashes are happening: weekend nights.
- Increase sobriety checkpoints, which are proven to reduce fatalities, injury accidents, and property damage accidents by about 20%, according to the CDC.[26]

Property Crime

According to the most recent FBI data (October 2023), in 2022, the rate of theft in Delaware was greater than that of the national average, 15.91 per 1,000 versus 14.02 per 1,000 respectively.[27] In fact, while not surpassing the national average, the rates of burglary and motor vehicle theft were also significant:

Delaware Property Crimes — Population: 1,018,396

	Burglary	Theft	Motor Vehicle Theft
Report Total	2,068	16,204	1,730
Rate per 1,000	2.03	15.91	1.70

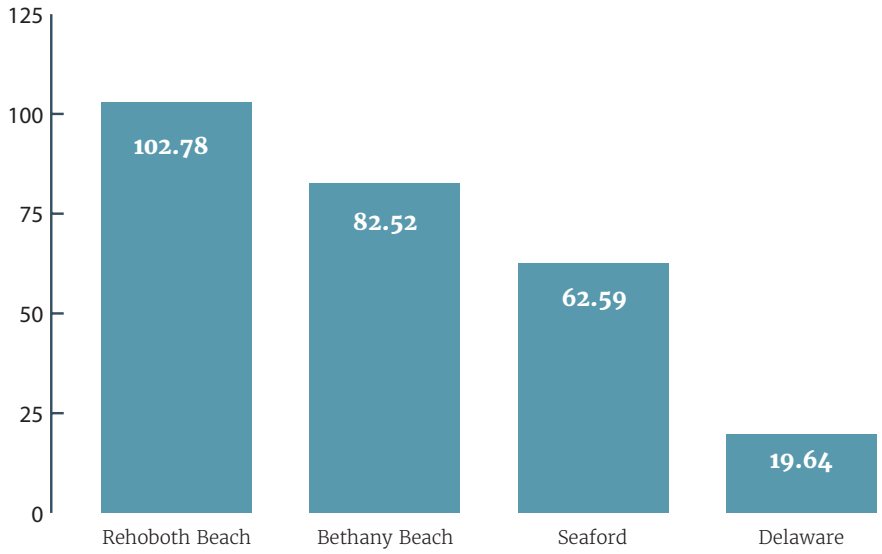
U.S. Property Crimes — Population: 333,287,557

	Burglary	Theft	Motor Vehicle Theft
Report Total	899,293	4,672,363	942,173
Rate per 1,000	2.70	14.02	2.83

In fact, *every year* since 2015, the rate of property crime per 100,000 residents was higher in Delaware than the national average.[28] Theft was the most reported property crime, accounting for 78% of all major non-violent crimes in the state in 2020[29]—and the number of retail thefts reported by the state police is higher year after year.[30] Most of these thefts occur in department stores, pharmacies, and convenience stores. And as the following charts show, the rates of property crimes are by far the highest at Delaware beaches:

Another big problem we have in Delaware is car theft. Over the period 2018-2022, motor vehicle theft offenses increased by 72% in Kent County and 38% in Sussex County.[31] Delaware's three largest police agencies were investigating an average of five car thefts per day last year.[32] There is a particular uptick in thefts of certain Kia and Hyundai vehicles due to a viral social media trend that shows that the vehicles lack anti-theft technology. Stealing vehicles is unacceptable and has real consequences for Delawareans: it violates property and privacy and prevents community members from safely getting to work and school.

Neighborhoods with the Worst Property Crime



Chances of Becoming a Victim of a Property Crime

1 in 10 Rehoboth Beach	**1 in 51 in all Delware**
1 in 12 in Bethany Beach	
1 in 16 in Seaford	

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There are a number of steps we can take to combat theft in Delaware:

- Restore the dedicated retail crime unit within the state police, assigned to exclusively to work on organized retail crime (ORC).
- Appoint a task force of state police, prosecutors, and court officials to meet monthly with businesses, home and other property owners, academics, and community members to study and recommend further actions to reduce property crime.
- Coordinate adoption of rapid-response technology between retailers and law enforcement.
- Join states like Virginia, North Carolina, and Illinois in passing further retail crime legislation[33] reinforcing the federal Inform Act, designed to deter the resale of stolen, counterfeit, or otherwise unsafe goods. The legislation requires the disclosure of identities of suspiciously high-volume sellers in online marketplaces, to make anonymity much more challenging to maintain should a merchant be profiting off of this illegally acquired merchandise.
- Follow suit with New York's Comprehensive Auto-theft Reduction Strategy[34]—which involves fast-tracking funding for law enforcement technology and equipment, enhanced alternatives and diversion programs to intervene with youth offenders, increasing enforcement and data sharing with local governments, providing funding for increased prosecution, and public engagement especially with car-owners most likely to be victims of vehicle theft—and in my first year as Governor decrease car theft by 20%.

Instituting Comprehensive Justice Reform

One of the businesses I started involved an international e-commerce app. As it grew, I realized we needed an office. And I needed help. I turned to the Challenge Program, an inspirational company in Wilmington that uses furniture manufacturing as a way to change lives. They initially helped me recruit Erick and Carlos, a couple of hard-working guys who learned to run a global shipping business. They then turned the business over to Haneef and then to Jamal and George. Each of these men who helped run the business had a criminal justice history and, as a result, had been shut out of and denied equal economic opportunity.

Bryan Stevenson, founder and executive director of the Equal Justice Initiative, encourages us to build a society that does not judge anyone by the worst thing they ever have done. I believe he's right. As I worked with each of these young men, I learned how deep the wounds of a failed criminal justice system are. Decades after being found responsible for crimes, each struggled to find a way to build a career to feed their families without being shut out of job opportunities or branded unfairly.

It was a tremendous advantage hiring them. When we give returning citizens an equal shot, they



thrive, and the rewards reverberate across our community. With limited formal career opportunities, Jamal had struggled for years to keep up with child support payments. We automatically withdrew them from his paycheck when he started working for us. Earlier this year, Jamal beamed as he opened a letter instructing him that all payments had been made. His years of child support delinquency was now over.

No one should be judged by the worst thing they have ever done. A just system gives everyone a second chance. And in Delaware, we truly can have a system that no longer criminalizes, incarcerates, and punishes people for being poor. To that end, I will decrease incarceration in the state by 20% within two years. And here's how:

Reforming Correctional Policies

The recidivism rate in Delaware is too high. For the past few years, Delaware had the second-highest three-year re-incarceration rate in the country. Delaware's re-incarceration rate has remained over 60%, meaning nearly two out of every three Delawareans were re-incarcerated within three years.[35] Much of this re-incarceration is due not to the commission of further crimes—according to Attorney General Kathy Jennings, recidivism, the measure of repeat offenses actually *decreased* by 60% from 2019 to 2022.[36] That means we're re-incarcerating a lot of people even though they're not committing more offenses. That's because we have an unduly restrictive probation system that locks up people for minor technical violations like arriving late for an appointment.

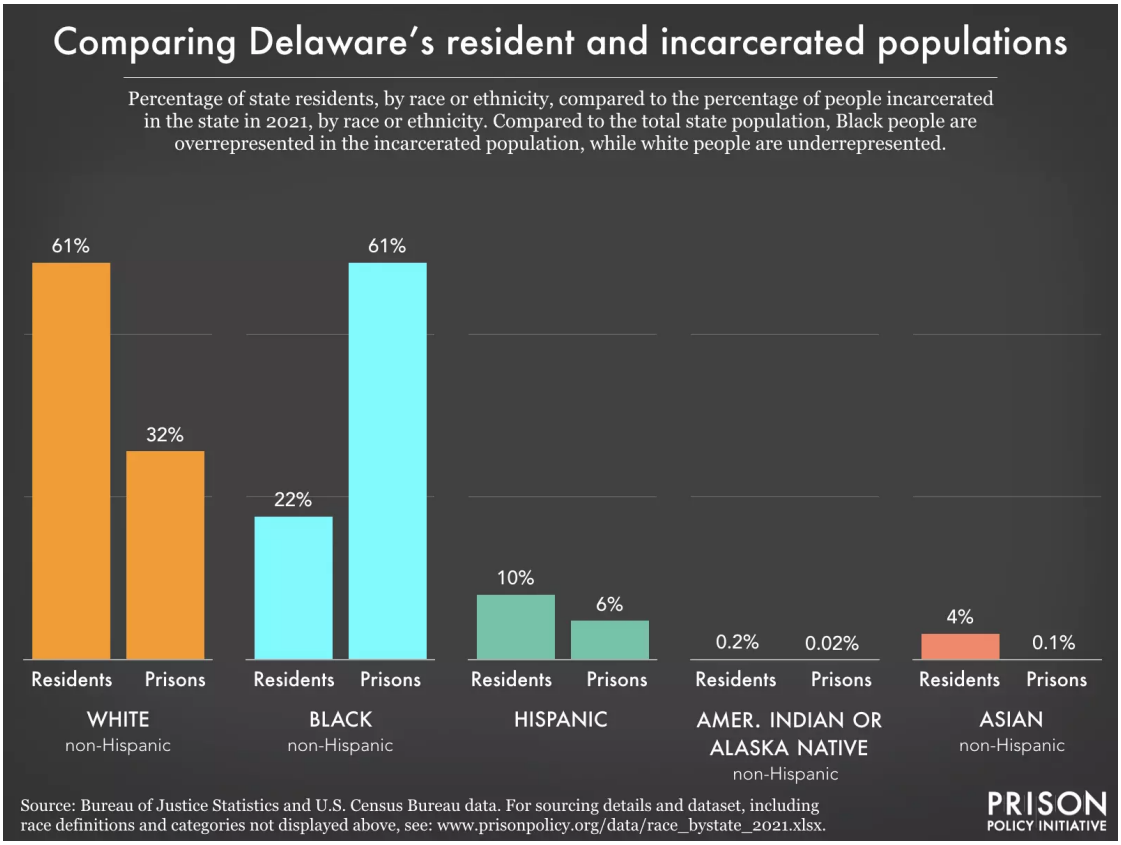
Currently, 10,000 people are under probationary supervision in our state—and Black Delawareans make up almost half (48%) of them despite comprising only 23% of the state's population.[37]

We need to address the inequities and unresponsiveness of our correctional and justice systems to promote a safer state for *all* Delawareans. As Governor, I will:

- Work to reduce incarceration rates and recidivism rates through more intensive and early corrective interventions and job training while incarcerated.
- Eliminate the criminalization of poverty by working to eliminate our state budget's reliance on criminal system fees and tailoring court fines to a person's income.
- Remove burdensome costs associated with incarceration by making phone calls free, creating free tablet services through our libraries, and examining incarcerated health care co-pays.
- Increasing the availability of plea by appointments and bail hearings so that no one is incarcerated longer simply because they are waiting to be scheduled.
- Create a streamlined release system so that incarcerated individuals can be released directly from our state courthouses, without having to return first to their correctional facility for "processing" that can take up to 72 hours.
- Support Senate Substitute 2 for Senate Bill 4[38] to reform Delaware's probation system to emphasize rehabilitation and support, restrict the use of incarceration for technical violations, and limit maximum incarceration length.
- Work to customize probation conditions to individual needs and rigorously collect and analyze data on probation and parole to reduce recidivism rates and increase our correction rate.
- Move-up interventions so they start on day one of incarceration, including during pretrial detention. Everyone incarcerated, regardless if they are pretrial or sentenced, should have access to GED programs, higher education, and job training pathways.
- Streamline and provide wider access to the numerous high-quality programs, such as Project New Start, for when Delawareans leave prison.
- Better integrate justice-involved individuals into society by funding affordable transitional housing in the state, banning certain forms of employment discrimination against people with

criminal records, and expanding expungement availability.

- Enact civil forfeiture reform, including ending conflicts of interest so that assets retrieved through civil asset forfeiture do not go directly to the police or the Department of Justice.
- Work with all of our enforcement agencies to address racial disparities in incarceration and create a strategic task force that will address racial inequity in all enforcement and justice agencies. Black Delawareans are incarcerated at a rate 5.4 times higher than whites.[39]
- End the state's practice of suspending driver's licenses of people who owe child support. You can't drive to work to make money to pay your child if you can't drive.



Reforming Policing

Inequitable policing, specifically at traffic stops, is a national problem. Unfortunately, this is also true in Delaware. Delaware's Operation Safe Streets (OSS) program is under scrutiny right now for racialized policing.[40] It is of utmost importance that our trusted law enforcement officers serve our communities fairly and responsibly. As Governor, I will:

- Oversee an in-depth analysis of the efficacy of OSS, and if it is not improving the safety of our communities, I will dissolve it.
- Increase pre-arrest community diversion programs, like Hero Help, throughout the state so that, in particular, people who are nonviolent and suffering from substance use disorder don't get wrapped up into the system.

- Ensure that emergency response teams include non-armed personnel with social work and/or medical credentials.
- Work for increased police transparency and accountability, as we have in New Castle County, such as collecting and analyzing data of all interactions. I will ensure increased transparency of data and initiatives to the community. Police data collection methodologies must be standardized and include all necessary demographic information for every stop conducted by an officer to understand both community and officer trends.[41] Community and police accountability are imperative to making our community feel safe.
- Invest in evidence-based, community-led, and focused solutions.
- Monitor and enhance the 2023 revisions to the Police Officers' Due Process, Accountability, and Transparency Act to continue increasing police accountability to citizens across the state.
- Enhance collaboration and cost-sharing among police agencies. Philadelphia has one police agency for 1.6 million people, while we have 49 for one million people.
- Promote social workers and behavioral health workers' response to public safety incidents. We will work for the direct dispatch of mental health professionals in mental health emergencies.

Expanding Economic Justice

The economic racial disparities in Delaware are stark. A projection by the federal government based on data from the U.S. Census Bureau's Current Population Study showed that there are major earning disparities by race in our state:[42]

Delaware's Earning Disparity Relative to White Workers

Race or Ethnicity	Earnings per Dollar
White	$1.00
Black	$0.76
Native American/American Indian	$0.58
Asian-Pacific Islander	$1.18
Hispanic/Latino	$0.71
Multiracial	$0.67

Data also show that the rate of poverty for those who are Black is twice that of those who are white. And the poverty rate for those who are Hispanic is nearly three times that of those who are white.[43]

Poverty Rate by Race/Ethnicity in Delaware

White	Black	Hispanic	Multiple Races	Total
5.9%	12.5%	17.4%	10.1%	8.7%

As Governor, I will:



- **Ensure Better Enforcement of Non-Discrimination Laws:** Despite laws banning racial discrimination, disparities exist in mortgage approvals, job opportunities, and wage levels. Improved enforcement of existing non-discrimination laws and funding for enforcement agencies will help counter workplace discrimination.
- **Rethink Systems that Maintain the Gap:** Reforms of various systems, such as taxes, higher education, healthcare, credit scores, and lending, are important steps towards equity. Changes in these systems, like decreasing the cost of public college tuition, could potentially narrow racial wealth disparities.
- **Promote Asset-Building Programs:** Proposals like "Baby Bonds" and guaranteed income programs are suggested to decrease inequality at birth and reduce racial wealth inequality. These programs could help families build assets, especially those with lower net worth. I will ensure the passage of the Baby Bond legislation in Delaware so that those born into poverty in Delaware have an investment in their future.[44]
- **Support Black-Owned Banks:** While not a panacea for closing the wealth gap, Black-owned banks can contribute to closing the racial economic gap. State and local governments need to support them with government deposits.
- **Protect Voting Rights:** I will work aggressively to make voting easier and more accessible for all citizens, including mail-in voting, no excuse absentee voting, and full voting rights for those previously incarcerated. And I will aggressively oppose any attempts to dilute the voting power of people by giving corporations, LLCs, or entities the right to vote, as some have proposed.[45]

Ensuring Protection for Gender and Sexuality

I am committed to prioritizing and protecting the rights of the LGBTQ+ community as an integral part of my commitment to fostering an inclusive and diverse state. Individuals who identify as part of the LGBTQ+ community are increasing among younger generations. In fact, a study conducted in 2022 found that 1 in 5 adult Gen-Zers identify as LGBTQ+.[46] The overturning of *Roe v. Wade* has increased anxiety around other protections that could be repealed. I guarantee you that the state of Delaware will continue to be a place where members of the LGBTQ+ community marry, have families, and thrive.

Protections for members of this community must go beyond "legal marriage." A study conducted by The Trevor Project of LGBTQ+ youth ages 13-24 found that 45% of LGBTQ youth nationwide seriously considered attempting suicide in the past year—but this was **even higher** in Delaware (49%). In fact, 17% of LGBQ youth *attempted* suicide in the last year.[47] And according to data collected by the Human Rights Campaign, Delaware is behind in enacting explicit protections for the LGBTQ+ community.[48]

As Governor, I will:

- Prohibit profiling based on actual or perceived LGBTQ+ status by law enforcement.
- Mandate reporting of hate crime statistics for both gender- and sexuality-based hate crimes.

- Support transgender people in receiving IDs that are aligned with their chosen name and gender identity.
- Allow surrogacy for same-sex couples and prohibit discrimination on adoption and foster placement in same-sex couple households.
- Ensure trans individuals can access Medicaid coverage in Delaware.
- Support access to gender-affirming care.
- Prohibit laws that restrict transgender people from using restrooms in certain public spaces.
- Prohibit forcible outing of LGBTQ+ youth.
- Prohibit allowing or requiring intentional misgendering of public-school students.
- Ensure equitable consent ages for same-sex couples.
- Ensure inclusive curriculums in all public schools.

End Notes

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MEYER

DEMOCRAT FOR GOVERNOR







MATT MEYER'S GETTING THINGS DONE

Making Government Work Better

In 2017, I moved from the classroom to elective office. Suddenly in charge of the state's largest local government—with over 2,100 employees—one of the first things I did was visit each office in county government. One of my stops was in a paralegal's office in our county legal department. There were papers everywhere—organized, big piles of paper throughout the office.

"What are all these papers?" I asked.

"Real estate transfer tax closing paperwork," the paralegal replied.

I put my hand over a big stack of papers beside me. "What if I just take these and run away?" I asked with a smile.

"Then we'd have many problems," the paralegal replied.

Governments must stop operating like we did in the 1980s. Any business that operated like this would quickly be beaten by a competitor. We have an obligation to deliver efficient, digital, secure government to you. Most government services can be delivered to you with greater levels of ethics, transparency, and efficiency in an app on your phone. We will work to do that.

About a year later, in 2018, Michael Hojnicki, the chief technology officer in New Castle County, presented me with a budget that included a county government investment in a video communication software called Teams. I was not too sure how or when we would ever use it for county government business, but our philosophy was to equip public employees with the highest quality tools, and our technology team thought it made sense. So, we invested in ensuring all county employees had access to Teams and a broad set of other work-from-home tools.

On March 13, 2020, we held an emergency meeting of the county government's senior leadership. The first COVID-19 cases were identified in our county. There was a deadly, invisible virus in our community. It was not safe for county employees to work in the office. Private companies and governments across the country were closing. Thanks to Teams, we did not miss a day.

Delaware is indeed the first state. We celebrate that, but it also means we are the oldest. Old legacy systems do not create innovative government. Under my leadership, we will work daily to create 21st century governance that is more responsive, secure, and transparent than any state government in our country.

The Meyer Record

- **Cleaned up county government:** In the two years before my starting as County Executive, 35 ethics complaints by county employees were filed with the New Castle County Ethics Commission. There was one last year.
- **Put the county checkbook online** to show where your tax dollars go. www.checkbook.nccde.org
- Collected record $16M in delinquent taxes and fees, driving a **historic high 99.45% collections rate** for 2017 & 2018 county property taxes.
- **Eliminated customer credit card service fees** for most payments to the county, decreased the number of check payments by 90,397, and enabled county residents to pay their property taxes in innovative new ways, such as by Apple Pay and Venmo.
- **Achieved AAA bond rating,** earned by only 1.6% of counties nationwide (48 of 3,007 counties).



MAKING GOVERNMENT MORE COST-EFFECTIVE

When I was a teacher, I believed in accountability in the classroom. I held my students to high standards, and they and their families had every right to do the same with me. There were defined metrics for success and consequences if these weren't met. I believe in the same in government, and as County Executive, I have made sure the public knew exactly how we were doing and that we were meeting all the metrics.

That's exactly the kind of governor I intend to be. I'll end the Same Old Same Old in Dover and make sure that the taxpayers' money is being properly spent—and that you, the voters and residents of Delaware, know all about it. I will:

- **Create an Office of Inspector General.** Such an independent, non-partisan office, with authority to investigate waste, fraud, and mismanagement throughout the government, exists at the federal level and in two-thirds of the states. It's time Delaware had one, as well. Legislation to create such an office has stalled in the legislature; I will press for its passage and, failing that, will authorize and appoint an Inspector General to keep tabs within the executive branch.
- **Conduct a full-scale efficiency review of the state government to ferret out waste and inefficiency.** Such reviews in other states have produced ongoing savings as high as five percent of state operations—which, in Delaware, would come to $300 million a year—without cutting needed programs and services.
- **Institute progressive tax fairness.** It is ridiculous that a family making $67,000 annually pays the same rate as a family making $67 million annually. It is particularly wrong given our school funding formula and the resulting inequities. We need to make our tax system more equitable so that the wealthiest taxpayers pay their fair share and we can lower rates for working families. I will introduce progressivism into the tax-rate structure above the current top bracket, starting at incomes above $125,000.
- **Encourage the Nonprofit Sector.** Nonprofits provide critical services across our state that create value and dramatically reduce the cost of government services. We will have the most comprehensive policies to support and collaborate with Delaware's non-profit and foundation sectors. We will pursue tax policies to incentivize giving and advocate for increased taxpayer contributions to support services for our most vulnerable. We will also promote policies that reduce costs and make non-profit operations more efficient, such as community- or state-supported employee healthcare for non-profits. In cases where non-profits are subject to overly restrictive regulations written for small businesses, we will seek opportunities to ease such restrictions, enabling more non-profits to contribute greater value to our communities.

MAKING GOVERNMENT MORE ETHICAL

The Center for Public Integrity gave Delaware a failing grade and ranked our state 48th for public integrity.[1] Our state has weak ethics laws and very little enforcement, especially regarding the legislative branch of government. As Governor, I will work to restore public trust in the whole state government. I will work to:

- **Require all elected and appointed officials to complete ethics training.** While the Delaware Public Integrity Commission is required to offer training on state ethics laws, no laws require attendance. As Governor, I will ensure that all public officials are trained in ethics laws so that nobody can plead ignorance regarding running a clean government. I will propose legislation requiring that all legislators, executive branch-appointed officials, and employees participate in and complete an ethics education and training program within six months of taking office.
- **Close the revolving door.** We should prohibit elected officials from lobbying, entering into state contracts, or obtaining state employment related to their work as legislators for two years after leaving office.
- **Veto redistricting plans that do not allow for competitive districts** to force the legislature to abandon its "incumbent protection" approach to drawing up legislative districts. Voters should get to choose their legislators—not the other way around.
- **Support the creation of an independent, nonpartisan redistricting commission** that includes public citizens—not politicians—conducts public hearings; uses criteria like population unity, contiguity, unity of counties and cities, and compactness when drawing up district lines; and contains protections for minority group representation.



1. See, e.g., https://pirg.org/edfund/resources/following-the-money-2014/.

MEYER
DEMOCRAT FOR GOVERNOR

MAKING GOVERNMENT MORE TRANSPARENT

For years, the U.S. Public Interest Research Group has given Delaware low-to-mediocre scores on transparency—for instance, a D+ on reporting public expenditures on economic development giveaways. More recently, the legislature has tried to narrow the state's FOIA law to shield more information from the public.

We ought to be going in the opposite direction. I want to make *more* information available to the public. As Governor, I will:

- **Require vendors to report to the state annually on potential conflicts of interest during the contract period.**
- **Require public officials to disclose any business relationships with registered lobbyists** on the required annual ethics financial statement.
- **Let the sun shine into legislative hall** by ending the Legislature's exemption from the Sunshine Law and establish a broad definition of public meetings, including any meetings of at least three committee members, sub-committee, or council conducting public business.
- **Increase lobbyist reporting requirements.** Require lobbyists having contact with a Member of the Legislature, legislative staff, or other public officials to report the date of contact, with whom the contact was made, the form of contact (telephone, in-person, email, etc.) and what legislative issue was discussed (including bill number if applicable) within 48 hours of the contact. Substantive contact will be defined broadly as any meeting, conversation, phone call, or email containing communications about pending legislation, policies, funding, or programs. Using a simple, one-page form submitted electronically, lobbyists can easily fulfill the requirement, and, at the same time, timely information is available to understand what lobbying influences are being brought to bear to affect proposed legislation.
- **Establish a presumption of openness for public records.** There are currently nine discretionary and 11 mandatory exemptions from the Public Records Act in Delaware. Some exemptions are needed to protect personal information or for security reasons. I will, however, establish a broad definition of public records and a policy of a presumption that records are open unless specifically designated otherwise. This will include both executive and legislative documents. I will appoint an Ombudsman to review disputes, require decisions within seven days instead of the current ten days, and require the payment of the plaintiff's attorney fees if rulings favor the plaintiff.
- **Support recently-filed bipartisan House Bills 291 & 292** to (a) require political campaign contributors to list their employer and job title, as the federal government and 38 other states require, to flag "passthrough contributions" from a company designed to circumvent contribution limits, and (b) require the Department of Elections actually to review submitted campaign reports, so that the public can actually learn what secret campaign "audits", like those of the current Lt. Governor, have actually *found*.
- **Establish a Delaware Elections Commission with real teeth**. Candidates for office are required to report their compliance with contribution and expenditure rules—but no one checks if the reports are true or even if they openly reveal violations. This is a boon to dishonest candidates and officials and mocks clean-government and transparency laws. I will work to establish a commission with real teeth, like the Federal Elections Commission, which requires it to perform mandatory audits of *all* campaigns for statewide office and to impose mandatory penalties on all violators. The days of treating campaign funds like Monopoly Money need to end.

MAKING GOVERNMENT MORE INNOVATIVE

In 1991, Estonia gained independence from the collapsing Soviet Union. They were a poor country creating a government from scratch. The cheapest and easiest way to do that was to build an all-digital government.

Twenty-five years later, 99% of public services in Estonia are available 24 hours a day online. Estonians complete their taxes online in under five minutes. About one-third of citizens vote online.

Today, Estonia has a major competitive advantage in attracting foreign investment and innovation and keeping homegrown talent home. Seamless company registrations and licenses are faster and provide more transparency and security than most countries and states, including Delaware.

In fact, Estonia is often referred to as the "Delaware of the 21st Century." Well, my aim is to keep *Delaware* the "Delaware of the 21st Century." As Governor, I will move our state to the cutting-edge of technological innovation in government. I will institute:

- **An internal government innovation office** to constantly seek out the latest cutting-edge advances in digital government and keep Delaware at the forefront.
- **The "No Legacy" Rule:** No state government IT system can be older than 13 years.
- **The "Only Once" Rule:** The state government will only ask individuals or businesses for the same information once. For instance, if you've given your name and address to the revenue department, the workforce agency can't ask you to input it again. After that, it is up to the government—not you—to build the connective IT systems to access that information across silos.
- **TED for Businesses:** Estonia allows new businesses to complete the "paperwork" to get started in only 18 minutes. Let's go one better—the famous TED Talks explaining complicated subjects are limited to 17 minutes. Let's create an automated system that can let entrepreneurs open a new business in Delaware within that amount of time.
- **Online Delivery of All Services:** In Estonia, all government services are available online. That means you can vote, get your driver's license, and even order medications under their equivalent of Medicaid, all on your own computer or mobile device, at your own convenience. Or, you can stick with real-world bureaucracies and service delivery *if you want*. We should make all state government services available online by the end of my tenure as Governor.
- **Own Your Own Data.** The big difference between Estonia and the U.S. is that, even with the government collecting and utilizing all this data, individuals retain ownership over and rights to all their own data. It's not the government's data, it's not the service provider's data—it's yours, and you should get to say how it's used, including if it's marketed for commercial purposes.

Those are just a start in how we can make the Delaware state government a world leader and ensure that it continues working for the People—not the other way around.

In short, the world is changing all around us, and it's time for a change in state government, too—a change that will get things done.