



News from State Representative
PETER G. SCHWEYER
 22nd District | Lehigh County



On October 31, I joined state officials and representatives from Allentown School District and Bloomsburg University to announce an agreement between the district and the university that guarantees college admission to all graduates who meet the criteria.

For Pete's Sake

I started receiving those glossy brochures from colleges and universities sometime in my sophomore year of high school. Each promised an excellent education, a true college experience and lifetime support for job placement. To me, a blue-collar kid who never even visited NYC or Washington, DC, it sounded amazing.

Then my parents and I saw the price tags and panic hit. How could we afford tens of thousands of dollars for a college degree? This is a real issue facing families everywhere. Students are going deep into debt for college as parents continue to remortgage homes and look for alternative ways to help their kids. The cost of education is a major barrier preventing even high-achieving kids from attending college, especially those living at or near the poverty line.

In the Lehigh Valley, our region's poverty is highly concentrated in our urban core. In other words, kids attending Allentown schools are far less likely to go to college than in surrounding districts. As an ASD dad, I know my kids get an excellent education, but poverty will prevent some of my kids' classmates from going to college. And without a clear path to college, many of them will remain in that cycle of poverty.

After a fight I had with educational leaders in Harrisburg, Bloomsburg University chose to step up. After a rather quick negotiation with ASD leadership, they agreed to team

up to reduce the barriers preventing smart, hard-working kids from going to college. Dedicated scholarships, parent engagement and guaranteed enrollment opportunities will ensure that these students have the same chances as other kids.

I was lucky as Pell grants and subsidized Stafford loans were available to me. I also attended Penn State which is publicly funded and thus more affordable. Through these programs, the community invested in me and my future. We need to invest in good, talented kids wherever they live. BU recognized this and is stepping up.

Neither my mom nor dad have a college degree, but they valued my education greatly. They wanted a different future for me than theirs and they saw college as the path that would lead me there. By being creative and trying to address this problem, Bloomsburg University and Allentown Schools are giving that same opportunity to thousands of kids who are just like me.

For Pete's Sake is a monthly column that appears in the Parkland, East Penn and Salisbury Press newspapers. The goal of this column is to provide readers with a more in-depth look at the issues we face in Harrisburg and the Lehigh Valley from my perspective in a manner that is longer than a Facebook post or Tweet.

My Office Can...

...help with heating assistance

Stay warm this winter! If you are struggling with heating bills, LIHEAP heating assistance can help. Contact my office at (610) 791-6270 to learn more, find out if you qualify and for help applying.

Get ready! Monday, Nov. 25, between 6 p.m. and 7:30 p.m., is your chance to ask me questions about what's happening in Harrisburg and in the district, or share your views on state issues.

Ripple Community Center
 1335 Linden St., Allentown.
Off-street parking is available.

I hope to see you there!

TOWN HALL MEETING
 with
 REPRESENTATIVE
PETER SCHWEYER

NOV. 25TH • 6 P.M. – 7:30 P.M.

Feel free to respond to me at repschweyer@pahouse.net.