

## Senate OKs trauma center bill after impassioned debate

SUBMITTED

A bill that would allow more Kentucky hospitals to be designated as Level IV trauma centers received approval in the Senate on Thursday following impassioned debate on the chamber floor.

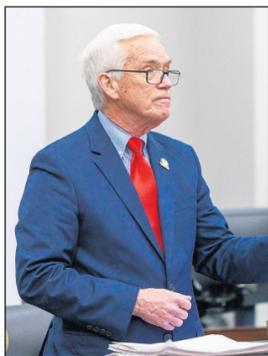
Bill sponsor Sen. Stephen Meredith, R-Leitchfield, said Level IV is the lowest designation of trauma center in Kentucky. The state passed legislation in 2008 to establish a statewide trauma network but never appropriated funding, he said.

Senate Bill 12 is seeking to ease some of the legal standards to help grow the network, particularly in rural areas that are struggling with gaps in health care, Meredith said.

National standards from the American College of Surgeons allow trauma centers to operate with a mid-level practitioner under the supervision of a physician, but Kentucky's law does not make that distinction, he said.

SB 12 would allow Kentucky Level IV trauma centers to operate if either a physician or an advanced practice provider is supervised by an on- or off-site physician at all times.

Meredith said the legislation would align Kentucky with the national standards while providing clear oversight, approved processes and



Submitted

**Sen. Stephen Meredith, R-Leitchfield, speaks Thursday on Senate Bill 12 on the Senate floor. SB 12 relates to medical provider coverage in Level IV trauma centers.**

approved coordination that ultimately supports patient care and more efficient transfers.

"We're 45th nationally in trauma-related deaths and a good measure because of a lack of those resources," he said.

"We need to build that network. I'm not here to ask for an appropriation today. I'm asking for relaxing some standards to expand our network."

Meredith read a letter from the chief executive officer of the Crittenden Community Hospital, who wrote that many Kentucky hospitals provide the same level of care as a Level

IV trauma center, but do not qualify as a Level IV due to staffing.

The bill drew debate on the Senate floor as supporters argued that the changes are needed to boost health care in rural Kentucky. Opponents raised concerns about the lack of an on-site physician.

One critic was Sen. Karen Berg, D-Louisville, who said that, as a physician who has worked in trauma at the University of Louisville for several years, she has concerns about lowering standards.

"Unfortunately, this part about having non-physicians in Level IV trauma centers is for me and for the trauma network that I have worked my entire life in, unacceptable," she said. "It is unacceptable because time is life. And to transport a patient to a facility where you know you do not have a medical doctor to respond is a waste of time."

Sen. Donald Douglas, R-Nicholasville, who is also a physician, voted against the measure. He said doctors are concerned generally about the lowering of standards in health care and that even though some health care workers can perform some of the duties of a doctor, that doesn't make them equal.

"Medical doctors and all specialties, this might be news for you all, but they're feeling

disrespected. And they're feeling devalued," he said. "We let other people creep closer and closer to having the privileges that we worked so many hours to have, that we took so many tests to have."

However, Sen. Scott Madon, R-Pineville, recalled how a local hospital in his district was facing bankruptcy and all of the doctors left to work in rural health clinics. He said he supports SB 12 because it's a tool for his community to keep the hospital open.

"They're not asking for a hand out, they want a hand up. They want a way to keep their hospital open," he said.

Sen. Gex Williams, R-Verona, said he enthusiastically supports the bill.

"I hope that as we get these physician assistants out into our rural communities, that they can tell their families about the Kentucky lives they saved, about the Kentucky injuries that they have kept and not some neighboring state," he said. "We need this bill passed and we need it passed as soon as possible so that we can get our Kentuckians the kind of rural health care that every state around us has."

Meredith said the bill isn't the ultimate solution, but emergency room doctors and primary care doctors aren't

SEE TRAUMA/PAGE B6

## Senate committee advances bill on school leaders' salaries

SUBMITTED



David Michael Hargis

**Sen. Julie Raque Adams, R-Louisville, testifies Thursday on Senate Bill 2 to the Senate Education Committee.**

A bill to ensure that classroom teachers aren't left behind when school districts consider pay raises for administrators was unanimously advanced Thursday by the Senate Education Committee.

Bill sponsor Sen. Julie Raque Adams, R-Louisville, said Senate Bill 2 reflects a core principle — that compensation decisions should align with classroom priorities while still respecting local governance and flexibility. The legislation would establish a clear, reasonable standard without eliminating existing waiver options already permitted under Kentucky law, she said.

"Specifically, the bill prohibits school administrators from receiving a percentage pay increase greater than the average percentage pay increase provided to classroom teachers in that district," she said.

The bill would reinforce fairness in compensation practices across school systems and reflect the value of classroom instruction in district-level decision making, Adams said.

Adams said the bill would not eliminate local control over compensation decisions and would not cap salaries or mandate specific pay raises. Additionally, it would not prevent districts from rewarding leadership or compensation for increasing responsibilities provided that those decisions remain balanced and fair to teachers.

"Classroom teachers are the center of student learning and school success. When compensation decisions favor administrative growth over classroom instruction, it can undermine morale, trust and long-term workforce stability," she said.

Senate Bill 2 is designed to promote fairness and transparency, support teacher recruitment and retention and reinforce public confidence in education funding decisions," Adams said.

Senate Minority Caucus Chair Reginald L. Thomas, D-Lexington, said he supports the bill, but retaining talent is highly important. He asked if the bill would prevent a school board from renegotiating the salary of a superintendent if that superintendent was being recruited by other communities.

"We do that in any organization, whether we're talking about Fortune 500 companies or in major sports leagues across this country or in any endeavor. If you have talent, and that talent threatens to go somewhere, you should want to take time or make time to try to retain that talent," he said.

Adams said the waiver option would be available in those cases.

"If that district wants to maintain that superintendent, and they feel that a funding decision is important in that retention, then they have that waiver option within this bill to make that decision. But that decision will be transparent, and everyone will know that's what's happening," she said.

Senate President Pro Tempore David P. Givens, R-Greensburg, said teachers are the backbone of schools.

"Let's not kid ourselves — the rubber meets road where the teachers are in the classroom and meeting those kids day in and day out and I applaud all of those teachers,"

SEE SCHOOL/PAGE B6

## Affordable housing bill passes committee

SUBMITTED

A bill that would enable religious institutions to build small-scale affordable housing units advanced from the House Local Government Committee on Tuesday, Feb. 3.

Rep. Michael Sarge Pollock, R-Campbellsville, is the primary sponsor of the bipartisan legislation, House Bill 333.

Pollock said the Sisters of Loretto, a Catholic women's organization, reached out to him and Sen. Jimmy Higdon, R-Lebanon, about a plan to renovate an empty structure into short-term housing.

"The conversation created an opportunity to share their story, and their input made it clear there is both a need and opportunity here in Kentucky," Pollock added.

Under HB 333, faith-based organizations would be allowed to build small-scale affordable housing up to 24 units on the parcel or contiguous parcel owned by the religious institution within a half mile of the development.

The legislation "also ensures housing remains affordable for at least 15 years," Pollock said.

Pollock said the legislation would implement additional safeguards to prevent clustering or large-scale development on properties that are owned prior to Jan. 1, 2021.

Additionally, HB 333 would expand a religious institution's ability to operate modest-sized homeless shelters, including cooling or warming centers, in industrial zoned areas, Pollock added. These facilities would be required to follow health and safety regulations.

Pollock told the committee the bill matters because homelessness is a real issue in Kentucky, and more affordable housing options can help.

"Faith communities in Kentucky are eager to play a constructive role in addressing homelessness and housing affordability," he said.

Rep. Sarah Stalker, D-Louisville, is a co-sponsor of the legislation. During a discussion on the bill, Stalker said she is under the impression the legislation will have a positive impact on the property tax base.

"I want to make sure that other folks are clear, and that I am clear on this, that the property tax base will only be impacted in a positive

manner because of this bill," she said. "Meaning that if somebody had a building they were no longer using, or sitting on a church property — they were not paying taxes on that. Whereas if they renovate that and now we have affordable housing, they will be paying into that the tax base. Is that correct?"

Pollock said Stalker was correct.

The House Local Government Committee voted unanimously to send HB 333 to the House floor for consideration.



David Michael Hargis

**Rep. Michael Sarge Pollock, R-Campbellsville, speaks on House Bill 333, an affordable housing bill, during a House Local Government Committee meeting.**

YOUR CUSTOMER JUST READ THIS AD. ADVERTISE WITH US.

**Online AUCTION**  
**BID NOW! LINK TO PLACE YOUR BIDS**  
**DixonAuctionAndRealty.Hibid.com**  
 • Lots of Tools • Mowers • Generator • Furniture •  
**BIDDING SOFT CLOSES: TUESDAY**  
**February 17 at 6:00pm CST**

ESTATE OF WILFORD & BETTY MORRIS

**OPEN HOUSE TO VIEW LOTS**  
**Monday, February 16**  
**3:00-5:00pm CST**  
**670 Main St., Hawesville, KY**  
**DIXON & DIXON**  
**AUCTIONEERS**  
 View all auctions at: [www.DixonsAuctions.com](http://www.DixonsAuctions.com)  
 Auctioneer: Scott Dixon • AU09000065 • 812-719-3006

**ONLINE ONLY**  
**LAND AUCTION**  
**IDEAL FOR HUNTING & RECREATION**

**Wooded Land with Rolling Hills**

Property Location:  
 2279 Greer Rd,  
 Payneville, KY 40157

Bidding Ends:  
**March 2 @ 6:00pm EST**

**176.452± Acres**  
**Selling in 2 Tracts**

Tract 1: 88.17± acres accessed from Morgan Rd.  
 Tract 2: 88.282± acres accessed from Greer Rd.

**Butler**  
 Auctioneers, LLC  
 270-617-2113

Armand Smith Auctioneer  
 270-617-2113 Butler Auctioneers LLC  
 Todd Akridge Associate Broker/Auctioneer  
 270-668-3047  
 Americana Real Estate & Auctions

[www.ButlerAuctioneers.com](http://www.ButlerAuctioneers.com)

**THE FORECAST CALLS FOR SAFE TIRES!**

- New Tires • Flats Fixed
- Field Service • Vulcanizing
- Fluid Service • Tubes

**WE'RE THE HOMETOWN FOLKS!**  
 BRING US YOUR TRACTOR TIRES WE WILL REPAIR THEM

*Mastercraft TIRES*

**BEST PRICES ON ALL SIZES**

**HARDINSBURG TIRE SERVICE**

**INTERSTATE BATTERIES** HWY. 60 EAST, HARDINSBURG, KY  
 PHONE: 270-756-5170