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The Philadelphia Inquirer

ALWAYS ASKING. ALWAYS PHILLY.

Cheltenham parents say warnings rebuffed

Players’ families said they aired concerns about coach Terence Tolbert, now charged in locker-room assaults.

By Jess Rohan
Staff Writer

Cheltenham High School varsity football families repeatedly warned district officials about allegations that former head coach Terence Tolbert allowed bullying to fester

in his previous coaching position at Abington Senior High School, parents say.

Tolbert, along with three other Cheltenham coaches, was charged last week with endangering the welfare of a child and conspiracy after a 15-year-old player was allegedly assaulted in the football team’s locker room by teammates twice last year. Six players were also charged. The assaults have led to the cancellation of two football seasons.

Both the district and a Montgomery County grand jury found that inadequate supervision played a

role in the assaults. The district also found coaching staff displayed “a failure to prioritize student safety.”

Tolbert and the other coaches are no longer with the district. Tolbert has declined to comment on the matter, and he and his lawyer did not respond to requests for comment on this story.

In the two months leading up to Tolbert’s hiring in June 2025, Cheltenham football families urged district officials to reconsider Tolbert’s hiring in numerous private conversations and public meetings, parents said in interviews this week.

“We protested and pleaded,” said

Naim Ferguson, father of Cheltenham quarterback Kendall Jackson during Cheltenham’s last season. “We didn’t think the people they were putting in place were adequate to handle the kids.”

Parents went to the principal, Benjamin Hammond, and vice principal Samuel Sheridan, who is also the athletic director, emails between the officials and football parents show.

A then-junior on the varsity team started a petition against hiring Tolbert.

“We ... do not want this position to be arbitrary given to the district’s

When does this stop?

The Cheltenham High School hazing incident is another failure of adult leadership, columnist Mike Sielski writes. **Sports, C1**

so-called qualified candidate,” the petition reads.

Taryn Knox, then the vice president of the football parent board, shared her concerns about Tolbert’s hiring process and his record at Abington at school board meetings and in meetings between administrators and football parents

→ SEE COACH ON A11



Police Commissioner Kevin Bethel responds to a question at a hearing of City Council’s Committee on Legislative Oversight. Bethel acknowledged that June 7 was “not a perfect day” but stopped short of apologizing for the department’s response. Tom Gralish / Staff Photographer

Bethel grilled by City Council over crowd control at Pride celebration

The police commissioner faced pointed criticism from lawmakers and LGBTQ+ leaders about officers’ tactics.

By Anna Orso
Staff Writer

Several members of Philadelphia City Council and a bevy of LGBTQ+ community leaders on Wednesday sharply criticized Police Commissioner Kevin Bethel, who testified

about the department’s response to Pride festivities in the city’s Gayborhood in June and largely defended the force’s crowd-control tactics that had drawn outrage.

Bethel acknowledged that June 7 was “not a perfect day” and vowed that the police department would implement more robust planning procedures ahead of next year’s celebrations.

But he stopped short of apologizing for the police department’s response, saying chaotic scenes from the Pride events were part of officers’ attempts to disperse crowds from the Gayborhood,

where thousands of people congregated instead of the city’s official festival on the Benjamin Franklin Parkway.

Among them, Bethel said, were hundreds of teenagers, some of whom were seen on video fighting.

“There’s a large group of young people who [had] descended into the neighborhood for what they think is something there,” Bethel said. “There is nothing for them there, other than to take over the street.”

That comment did not sit well with Council members and dozens of LGBTQ+ community members

who attended the hearing at City Hall.

“Your testimony today and what I’m hearing is both painful and perplexing,” said Councilmember Rue Landau, a Democrat who called for the hearing and is the first out LGBTQ+ person to serve on Council. “It is mind-boggling to think that you and your team would not know that people were going back to the Gayborhood.”

Councilmember Isaiah Thomas, a Democrat, said he was “confused” why groups of teenagers fighting would have prompted an outsized

→ SEE PRIDE ON A11

Military families detained, deported despite promises

The Trump immigration crackdown is stripping away protections offered for decades to the family members of active-duty U.S. troops.

By Jack Brook, Safiyah Riddle, and Aaron Kessler
Associated Press

President Donald Trump’s administration has detained dozens of parents and spouses of active-duty U.S. troops as it rolls back immigration protections for military families to pursue its mass deportation agenda, an Associated Press investigation found.

More than 50 parents and spouses of active-duty service members have been detained since Trump took office for a second term, and at least six have been deported, the AP found in the first accounting of such detentions, which the government does not track. At least eight immediate family members of U.S. service members remain in federal immigration custody.

Parents and spouses of people in the military have generally been shielded from deportation under bipartisan consensus for decades. But the AP found they’re now routinely being detained for months as they try to adjust their legal status through the policies available to service members’ close relatives and even as the military continues to recruit by advertising immigration benefits for enlistees’ families. Experts warn that the reversal could undermine military preparedness even as the U.S. is at war in Iran. It’s left military members without emotional support and caretakers for their children, delayed deployments, and forced some to take leave.

“How can I even focus on my military career because I have to

→ SEE MILITARY ON A10

Communities brace as TPS for Haitians is ended

About 200,000 of those affected hold jobs in industries like healthcare and food service. A march is planned for today in Philadelphia.

By David Nakamura, Maria Sacchetti, and Arelis R. Hernández
Washington Post

A federal judge on Wednesday took the final step in allowing the Trump administration to terminate

temporary protected status for 350,000 Haitians, meaning many are likely to lose their jobs and be at risk of deportation back to a country the United States says remains dangerous.

U.S. District Judge Ana C. Reyes of the District of Columbia had enjoined the administration in February from ending TPS for Haitians, and a federal appeals court had refused to lift the ban. Reyes reversed her decision after the U.S. Supreme Court ruled 6-3 in June that federal law bars judicial review of TPS determinations.

The high court’s ruling means TPS “is no longer in effect,” Reyes wrote in her new order Wednesday.

However, the judge said she would allow attorneys to continue seeking discovery and litigating their underlying claims that the Trump administration terminated TPS because of their clients’ race.

The Supreme Court’s ruling left open a narrow path for TPS holders to challenge the loss of their status on constitutional grounds. An attorney representing the immigrants involved in the Supreme Court case said the team is considering filing a new lawsuit.

Immigration experts said that even before Reyes’s amended ruling, companies had begun large-scale layoffs of Haitian TPS holders, who now face the possibility of

detention and deportation. Another federal judge in New York is expected to soon allow the Trump administration to formally end TPS for an estimated 6,000 Syrians to comply with the Supreme Court.

About 200,000 Haitians with TPS hold jobs, with large concentrations of workers in healthcare, food service, warehousing, retail, and long-term caregiving, according to an analysis of government data by the immigration advocacy group FWD.us. Business owners have been preparing for weeks by raising sign-on bonuses, cutting shifts and making inroads at community colleges and high schools to hire new staff,

→ SEE TPS ON A10

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