

The Philadelphia Inquirer

ALWAYS ASKING. ALWAYS PHILLY.

Cheltenham schools chief quits amid uproar

Superintendent Brian Scriven said the district, shaken by an assault scandal, needs “a fresh start.” Parents cited widespread problems.

By Maddie Hanna
Staff Writer

Cheltenham Superintendent Brian Scriven resigned Thursday, a little more than a week after prosecutors

charged four football coaches and six players in connection with violent assaults against a player last season in a high school locker room. The superintendent’s resignation, effective immediately, came amid community outcry over the district’s handling of the August and September 2025 incidents, which prosecutors say both involved students attacking a 15-year-old and using a broomstick to poke at his buttocks. Yet the district did not uncover that there had been two assaults, and administrators appeared to downplay a report from the

15-year-old’s mother, according to the Montgomery County grand jury that recommended the charges. It described a “level of incompetence” in the district that “put every young man on the football team at risk.” Some parents who have been battling the district to take student safety more seriously said Scriven and his administration did not fail only in overseeing the football program. “I see a complete lack of urgency,” said one mother who has been among a group of parents pressing the district since October to address violent incidents at

Cheltenham Elementary School. The mother, who spoke on the condition of anonymity out of fear of retaliation for her child, said administrators still have not answered questions about how students are disciplined and how others are supported after assaults. Another Cheltenham Elementary parent, Shanyl Jones, said her daughter, an incoming second grader, twice experienced sexual touching and comments in school. In kindergarten, a boy repeatedly touched her against her will, conduct that escalated to him grabbing her vagina, Jones said.

The boy also made sexually explicit comments to her daughter, Jones said. She reported the conduct and filed a Title IX sexual harassment case; the school moved the boy to a different classroom, she said. After a separate boy made sexual comments to Jones’ daughter in first grade, the principal called Jones and apologized, though the boy was not moved to a different classroom, Jones said. News of the football charges “just tore me up on what my daughter’s future would be in the school”

→ SEE ASSAULTS ON A9



A plea for protection

With thousands of Haitians at risk of deportation, community members, faith leaders, and allies marched along Market Street in Center City on Thursday to urge Pennsylvania’s U.S. senators to help restore temporary protected status for migrants from the crisis-plagued country. One pastor spoke of “fear ... of being returned to a place where there is no safety.” Story on B1. Aidan T. Gallo / Staff Photographer

Fauci contempt vote reflects the enduring politics of COVID-19

Six years after a pandemic thrust the world into fear and uncertainty, Republicans aren’t leaving it in the past.

By Ali Swenson
Associated Press

NEW YORK — Dr. Anthony Fauci is sitting before Congress, Robert F. Kennedy Jr. is on TV debating COVID lockdowns, and Americans can’t agree on what science to trust. You might think it’s 2020 again. Six years after COVID-19 thrust the world into the fear and uncertainty of a pandemic, Republicans in power aren’t leaving it in the past. Instead, they’ve returned its familiar political arguments to center stage for new scrutiny, demanding accountability for the scientists and media figures whom they feel deceived and mistreated Americans years ago. The efforts ramped up last week, when a Republican-led Senate committee chaired by Kentucky Sen.



Dr. Anthony Fauci appears before the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee in Washington last week. Allison Robbert / AP

Rand Paul subpoenaed the now-retired, 85-year-old Fauci to testify about his handling of the COVID-19 pandemic. The former National Institutes of Health immunologist repeatedly invoked the Fifth Amendment, after accusing the lawmakers of trying to coerce him to perjure himself to justify criminal charges. In response to his choice, on Thursday, the committee passed a vote to hold Fauci in contempt, a stunning move that could motivate the Justice Department to initiate an investigation. Separately, Kennedy, a politically independent former anti-vaccine activist who now serves as

→ SEE COVID ON A5

City Council calls for sweeping performance audit of Philly district

The review, to be conducted by the city controller, comes amid tensions over plans to shutter 17 schools.

By Kristen A. Graham
Staff Writer

The Philadelphia School District is about to face significant new scrutiny, with City Council President Kenyatta Johnson asking for a sweeping performance audit of the school system’s management and operations. City Controller Christy Brady has agreed to the request, which came via a letter in recent weeks signed by all 17 Council members, Johnson’s office told The Inquirer. The comprehensive review will go beyond the audit Brady’s office performs annually, delving into areas such as staffing and outside contractors. Council laid out no deadline for the audit but made clear it is expecting the results in time for next budget season, which will begin in the new year and ramp up in the

spring. The district, one of the largest in the United States, has a \$4.6 billion budget, which funds education for 113,000 students in 213 district schools and 65,000 in 81 charters. About \$2 billion of that money comes directly from the city. “While the SDP is subject to regular financial statement audits that examine the accuracy of financial reporting and compliance with applicable accounting standards, this request seeks a performance audit focused on evaluating the efficiency, effectiveness, and management of financial and operational practices, including budgeting decisions, resource allocation, internal controls, and long-term fiscal planning,” Johnson said in a statement Thursday. The news comes during a period of heightened tensions between Council and the district, spurred by members’ frustration over the school board’s move to close 17 schools and a separate \$300 million structural deficit that took Council by surprise. Last week, at a news conference where several members “begged” the district to come to the table

→ SEE AUDIT ON A14

Trump, Hegseth clashed over munition concerns

President said U.S. has “massive amounts” of munitions and vowed to hunt down leakers.

By Tara Copp,
Natalie Allison,
and Noah Robertson
Washington Post

President Donald Trump’s frustration over the Iran war boiled over at Camp David last week, where he demanded answers from Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth on why he had apparently been misled on extreme munitions shortages that now threaten to limit military options with Iran, two people familiar with the exchange told The Washington Post. The encounter took place on the sidelines of his Cabinet meeting at Camp David on Friday where Trump vented at Hegseth that he thought the munitions issue “had been fixed,” according to both people familiar with the conversation, who, like others, spoke on the condition of anonymity due to fear of retaliation. The shortages, particularly in long-range guided missiles and air-defense interceptors, have been part of the reason Trump has pulled back from launching additional massive strikes against Iran in recent days, one of the sources said. Trump said Monday that he had ordered and subsequently called off “the biggest attack since World War II,” pending claims of new negotiations over the Strait of Hormuz. The president asserted just after midnight on Thursday that the United States has “massive amounts” of munitions, saying in a post on Truth Social that “large amounts are being manufactured and shipped to the U.S. as needed.” The “leakers” of these treasonous statements are being hunted down,” he added.

→ SEE MUNITIONS ON A4

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