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Omicron upends return to U.S. schools, workplaces



Parents, students and faculty at L.B. Landry High School in the Algiers neighborhood of New Orleans wait in line to be tested for COVID-19 on Monday.



People wait in line at a COVID-19 testing site in Atlanta on New Year's Eve. The child tax credit, a coronavirus pandemic benefit that many progressives hoped to make permanent, has lapsed in a congressional standoff.

NICOLE CRANE/THE NEW YORK TIMES

Child tax credit's extra help ends Program kept 3.8 million out of poverty, studies found

Ben Casselman

For millions of American families with children, the 15th of the month took on a special significance in 2021: It was the day they received their monthly child benefit, part of the Biden administration's response to the pandemic. The payments, which started in July and amounted to hundreds of dollars a month for most families, have helped millions of American families pay for food, rent and child care; kept millions of children out of poverty; and inject-

ed billions of dollars into the U.S. economy, according to government data and independent research. Now, the benefit — an expansion of the existing child tax credit — is ending, just as the latest wave of coronavirus cases is keeping people home from work and threatening to set off a new round of furloughs. Economists warn that the one-two punch of expiring aid and rising cases could put a chill on the once red-hot economic recovery and

CHILD TAX • 5A

77 Philly sites will shift to 100% virtual this week

Jennifer Peltz Gretchen Ehlke Terry Tang

The School District of Philadelphia is among the school systems around the U.S. switching back to online learning for 77 schools because of the explosion in COVID-19 cases.

Other school districts in the country extended their holiday break Monday or switched back to virtual learning because of the rise in cases, while others pressed ahead with in-person classes amid a seemingly growing sense that Americans will have to learn to co-exist with the virus.



COVID-19 tests are administered to children on Monday at L.B. Landry High School in New Orleans.

Caught between pleas from teachers fearful of infection and parents who want their children in class,

school districts in cities such as New York, Milwaukee, Chicago, Detroit and beyond found themselves in a difficult position midway through the academic year because of the super-contagious omicron variant.

Philadelphia schools Superintendent William Hite posted on the district website Monday evening: "District leaders have been meeting regularly with local health officials to monitor the COVID-19 situation, and we've also been close-

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OMICRON • 4A

Councilmembers discuss 2022 goals

Gun violence prevention tops lists

Brian Saunders TRIBUNE STAFF WRITER

As a new year begins, several Philadelphia City Council members have their eyes set on specific goals in 2022 to help create a better, safer and equal opportunity market for all residents.

Councilmember Curtis Jones Jr., D-4th District, said he is looking to continue his work with the Citizens Police Oversight Commission after the five-member selection committee was established. The next step will be vetting and interviewing candidates who will



City Council President Darrell Clarke said his goals in 2022 are centered on reducing poverty, providing economic hope and opportunity, and, most importantly, reducing gun violence.

be one of the nine people to work on the commission. Nominees must then be confirmed by a majority vote of the Philadelphia City Council. Once selected, these people will serve the

public to oversee the conduct, policies, and practices of the Philadelphia Police Department.

Another project Jones said he is looking forward to is the 100 Shooter Review.

The committee for the 100 Shooter Review has analyzed data over the past year to view trends and hypothesize solutions to reduce all gun violence in Philadelphia.

"Councilmember Curtis Jones, Jr. will continue working with the 100 Shooting Review Committee as they move forward with compiling its data into a report for presentation to the public. Such a report will be presented before and evaluated by the City Council Committee on Public Safety," said a statement from his office.

This spring Jones is opening the Fourth District Container Village. This will be a flea market utilizing recycled and refurbished

Developers could build a record number of rental units in Philadelphia in 2022. Based on the volume of building permits approved by the city's Department of Licenses and Inspections in 2021, the final figure for the year could balloon to 10,000 — more than triple the average annual total of 3,000 to 4,000 new apartments.

Starting in 2022, the value of the abatement will shrink by 10% each year after the first year. But property owners with building permits in hand as of Dec. 31, 2021, can still avoid paying 100% of the building's real estate taxes for the full 10 years.

Either way, Gillen said, the surge is indicative of developers being "very bullish" on Philadelphia's rental market. "Otherwise, they would not have bothered filing for all those permits," he said.

But as developers pounce on market opportunities, homeowners and those seeking to buy are seeing the other side of the coin. Last summer, home prices were up 20%. They're now up just 10%, a noteworthy drop and a poten-

COUNCILMEMBERS • 5A

Analyst: Philly on track to build record number of apartments

Aaron Moselle WHY?Y

Developers could build a record number of rental units in Philadelphia in 2022.

Based on the volume of building permits approved by the city's Department of Licenses and Inspections in 2021, the final figure for the year could balloon to 10,000 — more than triple the average annual total of 3,000 to 4,000 new apartments.

"This is a massive wave of new construction. Much bigger than we've even seen before," said Kevin Gillen, a senior research fellow with the Lindy Institute for Urban Innovation at Drexel University and the analyst behind the data.

It's unclear if all 10,000 units will be built in 2022, or even in the years ahead. Gillen said it's likely that some developers filed permits preemptively, so they can take advantage of the

city's existing 10-year tax abatement for new construction before changes to the controversial program take effect.

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