

STATE SENATOR
JOHN M. DISANTO
15TH DISTRICT
DAUPHIN AND PERRY COUNTIES

senatordisanto.com
jdisanto@pasen.gov

THE STATE CAPITOL
SENATE BOX 203015
HARRISBURG, PA 17120-3015
(717) 787-6801
FAX (717) 783-3722

PERRY COUNTY OFFICE
P.O. BOX 236
7 WEST MAIN STREET
NEW BLOOMFIELD, PA 17068
(717) 582-2454
FAX (717) 582-2487



Senate of Pennsylvania

COMMITTEES

BANKING AND INSURANCE, CHAIR
URBAN AFFAIRS AND HOUSING, VICE CHAIR
EDUCATION
LABOR AND INDUSTRY
TRANSPORTATION

December 20, 2021

Ms. Nancy Moses
Chair, PA Historical & Museum Commission
300 North Street
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Dear Ms. Moses:

As State Senator for the 15th District, which includes the City of Harrisburg, I write to you about an issue that has recently come to my attention.

Let me begin by saying I consider myself a student of history and appreciate that our understanding of historical figures and events can change over time, and we should always seek a scholarly, fact-based account that includes contemporaneous context.

On or about October 10, 2021, a historical marker was dedicated by PA Historical & Museum Commission at 205 State Street in Harrisburg to recognize Richard Schlegel, who was born in Berrysburg, Dauphin County. The text of the marker is as follows: Fired from federal and state jobs because he was gay, this trail-blazing activist took his job discrimination case all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court. He lost, but his key arguments were valuable in later cases. In 1965, he founded the first LGBTQ+ group in central Pa.

I have been alerted to an interview that Mr. Schlegel reportedly gave in May 1993 at the age of 66. It can be found online at: <https://outhistory.org/exhibits/show/philadelphia-lgbt-interviews/int/richard-schlegel>. In this interview, he discusses activity of a sexual nature that he, as a sixteen-year-old, engaged in with a younger boy, "eleven, twelve maybe."

I was shocked and disgusted to read this account that sounds like predatory, grooming behavior from Mr. Schlegel, who admitted he himself "was the aggressor." Especially disappointing, Mr. Schlegel, rather than expressing any sort of remorse about putting the younger child in this situation, conveyed regret at not physically touching the boy, saying "I certainly wouldn't make that mistake twice, because he was so cute."

I bring this matter to the attention of PHMC so that you may consider whether Mr. Schlegel personally deserves recognition on a historical marker. While his court case may be notable, his admitted behavior was reprehensible and would be considered criminal, regardless of sexual orientation.

I appreciate your consideration and look forward to your determination.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "John M. DiSanto".

John M. DiSanto

cc: Andrea Lowery, Executive Director, PHMC