



STATE REPRESENTATIVE

Kristine Howard

167TH LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT

WEBSITE: www.RepKHoward.com

WINTER 2022

Greentree Office Plaza • 40 Lloyd Ave., Suite 309 • Malvern, PA 19355 • (610) 251-1070

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Dear Neighbor,

As we head into a new year, I'd like to provide you with an update of what's going on in Harrisburg, as well as resources to use right here at home.

Kristine C. Howard

UNEMPLOYMENT ISSUES

If you have any issues receiving unemployment compensation, you can reach out to PA CareerLink Chester County at (610) 280-1010, or visit them at: 479 Thomas Jones Way, Ste. 500 Exton, PA 19341

CONSTITUENT SERVICES

District Office Open by Appointment

To minimize wait times and provide the best service possible without the need to rush our visitors, my office is open by appointment only. To schedule your appointment, call my office at (610) 251-1070 or email RepHoward@pahouse.net. Please bring a mask to your appointment. If you're having an issue with anything related to state government, please call. My staff will do all they can to help you navigate through the red tape of government and get your concerns addressed.

Visit pahouse.com/Howard and sign up for my email newsletter to stay up to date!

NEW LEGISLATION

STOPPING HABITAT LOSS

We all recognize the importance of preventing the extinction of endangered species and safeguarding our shared environment. Yet there are no strong regulations protecting these species from indirect harm to the species as a whole. The deliberate killing of a protected animal carries a penalty; the destruction of a protected animal's habitat does not.

Protecting nests, mating grounds, and feeding areas should be at least as important as stopping poachers, yet current law has little to say on the matter. I find this legislative oversight unconscionable, and therefore have introduced HB 2128, which would require, as part of the permitting process for the construction of residential and nonresidential buildings, information to be submitted and reviewed to determine whether threatened or endangered species may be negatively impacted by such construction.

Under this legislation, PA's Fish and Boat Commission, Game Commission, and Department of Conservation and Natural Resources would be tasked with ensuring endangered species habitats are protected.

ENSURING ACCESS TO MENTAL AND BEHAVIORAL HEALTH CARE

One of the many issues brought to light by the COVID-19 pandemic has been the dire lack of access to mental and behavioral health treatment across the Commonwealth. Recruiting and retaining qualified individuals presents an ongoing problem.

Obstacles such as budget cuts, low wages and high caseloads often lead to burnout among social workers, making it difficult to prepare a sufficient workforce to meet the growing demand, ultimately leading to a lack of access to mental and behavioral health services for those in need.

To help negate the predicted shortfall of qualified professionals in PA, I have introduced two bills – HB 1926 and HB 2091. The first would create the Social Worker

Educational Enrollment and Training (SWEET) Program to provide financial assistance to qualified individuals participating in internship placement programs, as long as they agree to continue practicing Clinical Social Work in areas across the Commonwealth suffering from a lack of mental health services. The second would create the Behavior Welfare Educational Loan Lenience (BWELL) Program, under which students working toward a degree in any behavioral health field (social work, psychology, nursing, etc.) may be eligible for payment awards covering a substantial portion of their student loans if they agree to be employed at a residential treatment facility for a period of up to four years.

This legislation would help recruit, retain and show continuous support for our mental and behavioral health workers, fostering the emotional wellbeing of Pennsylvanians and ensuring no one goes without the help they need.

EMPOWERING THE ATTORNEY GENERAL TO PURSUE POLLUTERS

Our current laws do not afford us the ability to fulfill the Pennsylvania Constitution's right to clean air, pure water and the protection of our natural resources.

Without a referral from a local district attorney, the Department of Environmental Protection or another agency with jurisdiction, the Attorney General's Office cannot pursue bad actors who pollute and contaminate our air, water, and natural resources. This is why I have introduced companion legislation to three of Sen. Steve Santarsiero's bills, which would provide the Attorney General with concurrent jurisdiction in environmental crimes under Pennsylvania's Solid Waste Management Act, Clean Streams Law, and Safe Drinking Water Act, respectively. These changes will help us protect our beautiful Commonwealth by ensuring environmental bad actors are held accountable. In addition, I am presently working on additional legislation to enhance penalties for environmental crimes.

RECENTLY SIGNED INTO LAW

Over the past few months, the General Assembly has worked with the Governor to pass a number of important pieces of legislation, including:

- **HB 1774** amends the Achieving Better Care by Monitoring All Prescriptions Program (ABC-MAP) Act to allow additional designated personnel to access information through Pennsylvania's Prescription Drug Monitoring Program, an important step in reducing the prevalence of substance use disorder, increasing treatment opportunities and helping Pennsylvanians get the resources they need for recovery.
- **HB 184**, also known as Shawn's Law, amends Titles 18 (Crimes and Offenses) and 42 (Judiciary and Judicial Procedure) of the Pennsylvania Consolidated Statutes to enhance a sentence for causing or aiding suicide when the victim is under 18 years old, has an intellectual disability, or has autism spectrum disorder.
- **SB 397** updates physician assistant practice under the Osteopathic Medical Practice Act. Specifically, the bill revises the requirement that a physician assistant render medical care and services "under the supervision and direction" of the supervising physician, by requiring the physician assistant only be under the "supervision" of the supervising physician. This is a step toward increasing the availability of life-saving medical care throughout Pennsylvania.
- **HB 425** extends flexibility for certain licensees, including restaurants, by allowing them to extend the area in which they are licensed to serve alcohol to include a seating area within 1,000 feet of their main location; gives the PLCB the ability to issue eligible licensees unlimited off-premises catering permits and an additional year of safekeeping, along with other changes. This will allow our restaurants greater flexibility and effectively allow outdoor dining to become permanent.

SNOW REMOVAL

The National Safety Council recommends the following tips for safe snow removal:

FOR ANYBODY SHOVELING:

- Do not shovel after eating or while smoking.
- Take it slow and stretch out before you begin.
- Shovel only fresh, powdery snow; it's lighter.
- Push the snow rather than lifting it.
- Lift with your legs, not your back.
- If you do lift it, use a small shovel or only partially fill the shovel.
- Do not work to the point of exhaustion.
- Know the signs of a heart attack, and stop immediately and call 911 if you're experiencing any of them; every minute counts.

FOR THOSE USING A SNOW BLOWER...

- If the blower jams, turn it off.
- Keep your hands away from the moving parts.
- Be aware of the carbon monoxide risk of running a snow blower in an enclosed space.
- Add fuel outdoors, before starting, and never add fuel when it is running.
- Never leave it unattended when it is running.

WINTER DRIVING

Remember, if winter weather is forecast, eliminate all unnecessary travel. This will keep you and your family safe and allow PennDOT to more easily perform its winter duties. However, if you must travel, PennDOT offers the following tips for safe driving this winter season.

- Carry a winter emergency travel kit.
- Listen to weather and travel advisories, but if you don't have to travel in bad weather, don't.
- Keep your gas tank at least half full.
- Slow down and increase following distance.
- Avoid sudden stops and starts.
- Beware of roads that may look wet, but are actually frozen, often referred to as "black ice."
- Use extra caution on bridges and ramps, where ice can often form without warning.
- Carry a cellphone.
- Do not use cruise control while driving on snow-covered roads.
- State law requires you to turn on your headlights when your wipers are on.
- Use your low beams in particularly bad weather, especially in cases of heavy or blowing snow.
- Remove snow that may obscure your license plate.
- Remove ice and snow from windows, mirrors, and all vehicle lights before you drive and as often as needed.
- Remove snow and ice from the hood and roof of your vehicle. This will prevent it from blocking your vision by sliding onto the windows, and state law allows for penalties if snow or ice from your vehicle strikes a vehicle or person and causes death or injury.
- Do not park or abandon your vehicle on snow emergency routes.
- Do not pass or get between trucks plowing in a plow line (several trucks plowing side by side).
- Make sure someone else knows where you are going and when you expect to arrive. In case you run into an emergency and need help, someone will know where to look for you.
- If you do become stranded, it's better to stay with your vehicle until help arrives. Run the engine every hour or so, but make sure the tailpipe is clear and keep the downwind window cracked open.
- Do not drink and drive, and always wear your seat belt.

WHERE'S MY PLOW?

All of PennDOT's roughly 2,200 PennDOT-owned and rented plow trucks are equipped with Automated Vehicle Location (AVL) systems, which use in-truck technology to log and share data in real-time for that truck. The routes of these interstate and expressway trucks can be viewed in real-time at www.511PA.com.



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lpo.km.1221



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SOME ADDITIONAL SERVICES MY DISTRICT OFFICE CAN ASSIST WITH:

- Car registrations, special tags, titles and license applications
- Information on financial assistance for higher education
- Unemployment compensation problems
- Birth and death certificate applications
- Problems with Pennsylvania income taxes
- Problems with Department of Human Services (food stamps, welfare)
- Requests for literature of all kinds — bills, regulations, statutes, Pennsylvania maps, senior citizen information, student aid information, etc.
- Citations from Pennsylvania House of Representatives for outstanding local accomplishment and family milestones
- Complaints or questions about utilities and the PUC
- Consumer complaints
- Problems or questions about PennDOT
- Tours of the state Capitol for individuals or groups
- Disability license plates and placards
- Getting and filling out state forms of all kinds, like PACE (pharmaceutical assistance for qualified senior citizens), voter registration, Property Tax/Rent Rebate (for qualified seniors), PHEAA (PA Higher Education Assistance), etc.
- Problems or questions about the State Lottery
- Local government officials' problems with state agencies

Any issue with state government!