

State Representative | 34th Legislative District

# SUMMER LEE



## DEAR NEIGHBOR,

I hope this newsletter finds you and your family well as we move into a period of hope and new life after a tough year. Over the last few months, several vaccines were proven effective at decreasing the risk of contracting COVID-19 and approved for mass distribution. I know that many of you have faced tremendous difficulty in scheduling vaccination appointments and keeping yourselves safe in the meantime. Fortunately, several federal and state relief programs have delivered vital aid to our communities that have been wounded by the virus and its social and economic consequences. We have begun our recovery process, but we will still encounter obstacles in the path to healing. As your legislator, I promise to continue the fight for marginalized communities and social equity so that everyone is lifted out of this pandemic.

In January, I was proud to be sworn in for a second term as state representative for the 34th Legislative District. A new legislative session warranted new committee assignments, and I now serve on the House Education, Health, and Judiciary committees. These three committees vote on legislation that impacts the soul of our communities, and I will prioritize legislation that ensures our children excel in school, makes our communities healthy, and keeps all of us safe.

I was also selected to serve as the vice chair of the Pennsylvania Legislative Black Caucus. This group of lawmakers provides information to and advocates for African American, Latino, and other people of color within the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

My staff and I look forward to hosting events again in person and catching up with you when conditions are safe. In the following pages, you'll find information about community resources, grants and ongoing projects, and legislative happenings in Harrisburg.

Best,



Braddock Office:

501 Braddock Ave. | Suite 105 | Braddock, PA 15104 | (412) 273-3400

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## LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

Bills Sponsored: 146

Resolutions Sponsored: 14

**CROWN Act** – Democratic Leader Rep. Joanna McClinton and I are renewing our fight to end discrimination against hairstyles in the Commonwealth. We are again sponsoring the CROWN Act, which stands for Creating a Respectful and Open World for Natural Hair. If passed, it would protect against discrimination based on race-based hairstyles. Our legislation would extend statutory protection to hair texture and protective styles such as braids, locs, twists, and knots in the workplace and public schools. No one should be denied access to education or employment opportunities based solely on their hairstyle.

**Eliminating Cash Bail** – It's past time we address one of the inequities in Pennsylvania's criminal justice system and eliminate cash bail. The current system dictates who remains free and who remains behind bars before their trial based on how much money they have. This means that folks who have means can walk free, while less fortunate folks remain locked behind bars – and locked in a system that perpetuates poverty. I'm introducing legislation that would eliminate cash bail from Pennsylvania and make the criminal justice system fairer and more equitable.

**Burden-Free Community College** – Student debt is a significant problem in Pennsylvania, and it needs to be addressed now. That's why I'm sponsoring two bills that would allow students at any one of Pennsylvania's 14 state community colleges to complete their two-year degree and find a steady job before they begin repaying tuition. H.B. 984 would pay up-front tuition for college students who attend one of the state's 14 community colleges, who are pursuing a degree in a high-need career path, and who stay in the state after graduating. Those students would begin repaying within the first 10 years of graduating. H.B. 985 would establish funding for the program by extending the state sales and use tax to dry cleaning services.

# IMPORTANT POLICY HEARINGS

**Rights of Incarcerated Parents** - Incarceration impacts entire families, especially children, and not just one individual. Maintaining the parent/child relationship during incarceration is of the utmost importance for the well-being of the impacted family and community. I recently hosted a hearing with the House Democratic Policy Committee on protecting the rights of incarcerated parents and their children. It featured testimony from families impacted by incarceration, as well as advocates and experts on solutions to mitigate the negative impacts on families and maintain dignity for incarcerated parents. This hearing has helped shape legislation and inform legislators as to what we can do to protect the valuable relationship between incarcerated parents and their children.

**Ending Cash Bail in Pennsylvania** - Cash bail is an antiquated idea that needs to be reformed in order to address racial inequities within Pennsylvania's criminal justice system. I recently held a separate hearing with the House Democratic Policy Committee on the benefits of eliminating cash bail and making the system fairer and more equitable. We heard from testifiers who have witnessed how cash bail exposed systemic racism



and traumatic practices that ignored the presumption of innocence and implemented punitive detainment practices. This hearing helped drive the legislation I'm introducing to eliminate cash bail in Pennsylvania.

## GRANTS IN THE DISTRICT

I am thrilled to report that since December, more than \$123 million (\$123,248,659) in state and federal grant funding has been awarded to municipalities, school districts, and other organizations in the 34th Legislative District.

### Major Federal Funds to Schools

Pennsylvania is expected to receive \$4.9 billion in federal funding to help Pre-K through 12 schools return students to the classroom. The funding was allocated in the most recent federal COVID-19 relief bill, known as the American Rescue Plan. School districts must use at least 20% of this money to address learning loss and the social, emotional, and academic needs of disadvantaged students. The rest of the funding can be used for food service, technology, sanitization and cleaning supplies, summer and after-school programs, and mental health supports.

### Other Grants

**\$1.5 million** to Pennsylvania Organization for Women in Early Recovery (POWER) to renovate a former Catholic elementary school in Swissvale into a multi-service POWER campus for women, their families, and the community.

**\$1 million** to the Braddock Carnegie Library Association to support the 132-year-old library's renovation project to improve accessibility, address masonry and other issues and renovate its historic music hall for events.

**\$1 million** to the Western Pennsylvania School for the Deaf to improve and restore several buildings on its Edgewood campus to ensure it can continue to serve deaf and hard-of-hearing students for generations to come.

The following amounts were awarded to schools in the district:

\$100.1 million to Pittsburgh School District

\$5 million to Steel Valley School District

\$14.1 million to Woodland Hills School District

**\$43,067** from the PA Department of Education to the Turtle Creek and Edgewood Elementary STEAM Academies for the purchase of new food service equipment.

**\$199,642** from the EPA to Landforce (Pittsburgh Conservation Corps), located in North Braddock, for training people with barriers to employment in various technical and soft skills.

**\$174,375** from the PA State Clean Diesel Grant Program to Allegheny Transportation Services, located in Braddock and serving Woodland Hills School District and Pittsburgh Public Schools, for the purchase of nine new diesel school buses to improve air quality and reduce emissions from mobile sources.

# FOR FAMILIES

## PROGRAMS AND RESOURCES

Our commonwealth organized resources to help those affected by the pandemic, many of which are listed below. If you need help with these or any other issue, please contact my office.

### IT'S OK TO REACH OUT FOR HELP

This health crisis has created additional stress for many. Please know that it's OK to ask for help.

- **Crisis Text Line:** Text 'PA' to 741741 for help 24/7.
- **PA's support helpline:** Run by the Department of Human Services - 855-284-2494.
- **Disaster Distress Helpline:** Experiencing emotional distress due to COVID-19? Call 1-800-985-5990 or text 'TalkWithUs' to 66746 to connect with a trained crisis counselor.
- **Get Help Now for substance use disorder:** Reach out for support from the Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs by calling 1-800-662-4357.

### Rental and Utility Assistance

In March, Allegheny County reported having \$79.9 million for individuals and families who need assistance in paying their rent and/or utilities. Of that funding, \$43 million was awarded to the county from Act 1 of 2021, which the governor signed into law in February.

The application went live on March 15, and the county is accepting applications now.

To apply, visit [covidrentrelief.alleghenycounty.us](https://covidrentrelief.alleghenycounty.us)  
Or visit [www.compass.state.pa.us](https://www.compass.state.pa.us)

Drop-in help centers around Allegheny County, with one in Braddock, are open for those without a computer or internet access who want to apply for assistance.

**Greater Valley Community Services**  
**300 Holland Avenue, Braddock PA, 15104**  
**Hours: Mon, Tues: 12 p.m. – 7 p.m.,**  
**Wed, Thurs, Fri: 8:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.**

If you cannot get online or go to a drop-in center, or need help completing the application, you may contact ACTION-Housing at 412-248-0021.

### LIHEAP- Utility Grant

The 2020-21 application window for the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) has been extended to April 30 and you can apply at [www.compass.state.pa.us](https://www.compass.state.pa.us). However, as mentioned above, those needing help with utilities can also apply for assistance through the county, contact their utility company about enrolling in the CAP program, and ask about the Dollar Energy Fund.

### SNAP – Feeding families

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) helps eligible Pennsylvanians buy food. You can apply online at [www.compass.state.pa.us](https://www.compass.state.pa.us).

### CHIP – health insurance for kids and teens

The Children's Health Insurance Program is designed to provide health insurance to uninsured children and teens who are not eligible for or enrolled in Medical Assistance. You can apply online at [www.chipcoverspakids.com](https://www.chipcoverspakids.com).

### COVID-19 Vaccination, Tracking and Testing

During the last few months, multiple COVID-19 vaccines were studied, proven effective, and approved by the federal government for distribution. This has given hope to many of us that we will soon be able to gather safely and reduce the impact of the virus on our schools, health care system, and business community. As of April 1, about 5 million people had received at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine.

However, the national and state vaccine rollout has not been equitable. According to a study published in March by the Kaiser Family Foundation, national COVID-19 vaccination rates have been low among the African American, Hispanic, and Asian populations. Out of those vaccinated in Pennsylvania, only 4% were African American, 3% were Hispanic, and less than 1% were Asian. For reference, of the total PA population, 11% are African American, 8% are Hispanic, and 4% are Asian. This is unacceptable for communities that already face more barriers to fair housing, employment, health care, and more. As I currently sit on the House Health Committee, I will continue to advocate for equitable vaccine distribution among vulnerable populations and better collection of data on the race and ethnicity of vaccinated people.

I urge you to search for a vaccination appointment now, if you have not already been vaccinated. My staff and I have heard from many of you that the slow distribution of vaccinations and the decentralized appointment registration system has caused frustration. As the supply of the vaccine rapidly grows, we anticipate that folks will have less trouble finding an appointment. There are several vaccine providers in the district, including Braddock, Homestead, Forest Hills, and Wilkins Township.

\*\*To view a list of vaccine providers, please visit [health.pa.gov](https://health.pa.gov) and Click COVID-19 Vaccine.

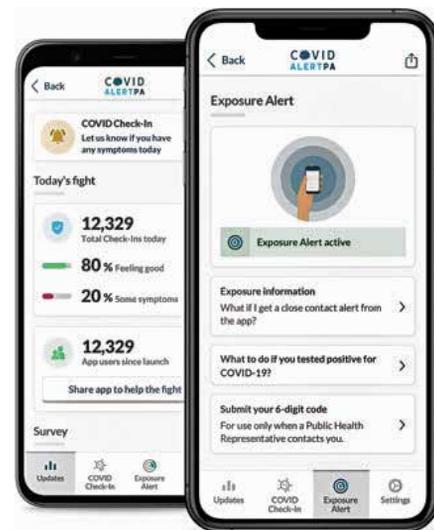
If you are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19, it is imperative that you get tested.

Testing is available in Swissvale, Braddock, Homestead, and Pittsburgh.

For locations, visit:

[www.health.pa.gov](https://www.health.pa.gov) -> COVID-19 -> Symptoms & Testing

**Download PA Dept. of Health COVID-19 app:**



# FOR BUSINESSES

## [Department of Community and Economic Development](#) – [dced.pa.gov](#)

Find resources including detailed guidance for businesses, information on funding and state and federal programs, and more.

### [Hospitality Industry Grants](#)

In February, \$145 million was allocated to Pennsylvania counties to aid restaurants and hospitality industry businesses that were adversely affected by the pandemic. About \$14 million was awarded to Allegheny County from the state government, and the funds were soon exhausted before the end of March.

Though the funds have been exhausted from the COVID-19 Hospitality Industry Recovery Program (CHIRP), more information for businesses can be found at the Allegheny County Economic Development webpage.

## COVID-19 RELIEF FOR PA

Legislature delivers nearly \$1 BILLION to help communities



**\$145 MILLION**  
for hotels, restaurants,  
catering, and more through the  
new Hospitality Industry  
Recovery Program

Visit [www.alleghenycounty.us/economic-development](http://www.alleghenycounty.us/economic-development)

[U.S. Small Business Administration](#) – [sba.gov](http://sba.gov)

Find information on federal funding and resources.

## CONSTITUENT SERVICES

My staff and I are happy to help you navigate state and local assistance programs. Due to ongoing concerns about the coronavirus, we will continue to serve you by phone and email primarily. If you wish to come to the office for assistance, we require that you contact us to schedule an appointment. Unfortunately, we cannot accept walk-ins at this time due to limited space. If you wish to pick up informational materials only, you do not need to schedule an appointment. If you arrive at the office and see people waiting inside, please do not enter until someone exits. All of our informational materials are available in the vestibule. If we are running low or missing anything, please give us a call or send us an email.

### **Need help with filing your annual Property Tax/Rent Rebate application?**

The deadline to complete your annual Property Tax/Rent Rebate application is currently June 30, 2021. Blank 2020 booklets with applications and instructions are available in the informational stand in our office entrance. Those who applied and were approved last year may have already received a booklet in the mail earlier in the year.

### **If you need help with a rent or property tax rebate claim:**

1. Please mail or drop off your booklet and required information to our office:

501 Braddock Ave., Suite #105  
Braddock, PA 15104

2. Provide all necessary documentation as described as follows:.

### **All claimants must provide:**

- Proof of ALL your income for 2020. That includes the form that you received in January from the Social Security Administration stating total benefits you received in 2020. Please do not provide the form you received that states how much you will be receiving in 2021.

- Proof of any income you received from a pension, interest, wages, unemployment benefits, etc.
- A copy of your unexpired driver's license/photo ID card if you are a first-time filer.

### **RENTERS must provide:**

- The PA Rent Certificate completed and signed by your landlord/property manager.
- \*\* If your landlord is unavailable to complete the Rent Certificate, the form must be notarized, and you should speak directly with our staff.

### **PROPERTY OWNERS must provide:**

- Proof of payment for 2020 property taxes. Please bring all 3 property tax receipts for 2020 from your municipality, school district, and county tax offices. OR
  - If you pay property taxes through an escrow account from your mortgage company, please bring your 2020 mortgage statement showing the amount that you paid in property taxes.
3. All claimants must do the following:
- Fill out Section (I), providing your name, address, birthdate, SSN, and a daytime telephone number.
  - Complete Section (IV), your signature, and the date.
4. Our staff will complete your claim, submit the original to Harrisburg, and mail you a copy for your records. We will call you at the telephone number you provide to let you know when we have completed your forms and when we are mailing them to Harrisburg.

If you need assistance, please call 412-273-3400 to schedule an appointment.

# UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFITS

After the federal unemployment programs expired on December 27, 2020, many were forced to wait until extensions were added to resume collecting unemployment benefits. Initially, an additional 13 weeks were added to both the PUA and PEUC programs. Those weeks were made available to claim by the end of January, but the delay caused a lot of confusion and issues for folks who were not sure how to continue filing. Some of the issues were caused by aged UC information technology and glitches with the relatively new PUA website, and some were caused by a claimant misunderstanding the instructions.

In February, the federal government authorized additional extensions for the Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (FPUC), Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation (PEUC), and Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) programs. Now, the programs will be offered until September 6, 2021.

If you or someone you know lost their job during the pandemic, there are two main unemployment programs available. Please visit the Labor & Industry website for the latest updates.

My staff and I understand and feel your frustrations with the Unemployment Compensation and Pandemic Unemployment Assistance programs. Over the last several months, we have been able to assist many people as best we can. We can give you general information about the programs or submit an inquiry to the Department of Labor & Industry on your behalf.

If you have issues with or questions about your individual claim, please call our office, email us, or complete one of the following forms so we can collect the information we need to help:

- For Unemployment Compensation (UC), Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation (PEUC), or Extended Benefits (EB):

Visit → [pahouse.com/lee](http://pahouse.com/lee) → Scroll over 'Help & Services' → Click 'UC Help Contact Form'

- For Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA)

Visit → [pahouse.com/lee](http://pahouse.com/lee) → Scroll over 'Help & Services' → Click 'PUA Assistance Form'

## Traditional Unemployment Compensation (UC)

→ [www.uc.pa.gov](http://www.uc.pa.gov) → File an Initial Claim

## Unemployment for self-employed, gig or contract workers (PUA)

→ [www.uc.pa.gov](http://www.uc.pa.gov) → File for PUA

# EVENTS IN THE COMMUNITY

To organizations, community groups, elected officials – if you are hosting an event either in person or virtually in the 34th District, please let our office know so we can either attend or assist you in spreading the word to the community.

# MY OFFICE CAN HELP YOU WITH:

- Unemployment or the PUA system.
- Property tax/rent rebates for seniors and people with disabilities.
- Voter registration and vote by mail.
- Problems with the Department of Human Services (food stamps, medical and income assistance).
- Car registrations, special tags, disability parking placards, titles, and driver's license applications.
- Information on financial assistance for higher education.
- Assistance in obtaining and completing state forms of all kinds.
- Birth and death certificates.
- Pennsylvania income tax questions or problems.
- Complaints or questions about utilities and the Public Utility Commission.
- Complaints and problems with insurance companies.
- Renewal of state-issued licenses or certifications.

- Problems or questions about the state lottery.
- PACE cards for senior citizens.
- Consumer complaints.
- Port Authority ConnectCards.

At this time, we are largely unable to process senior ConnectCard applications, unless you can submit your picture and scan of your ID electronically.

**If you need help with any state or government-related services, please contact my office for assistance.**

### Braddock Office:

501 Braddock Ave. Suite #105, Braddock, PA 15104-9998  
Phone: (412) 273-3400 • Fax: (412) 273-3434

### Harrisburg Office:

*My Capitol office in Harrisburg has moved.*  
25 B East Wing • P.O. Box 202034 • Harrisburg, PA 17120-2034  
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State Representative

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State Representative | 34th Legislative District

# SUMMER LEE

## SPRING UPDATE

### INSIDE:

- ✓ Legislation update
- ✓ Important Policy hearings
- ✓ Grants in the district
- ✓ Resources for families/businesses
- ✓ COVID-19 vaccination, tracking and testing
- ✓ Unemployment benefits

**District Office:**

Braddock Office  
501 Braddock Ave.  
Suite 105  
Braddock, PA 15104  
(412) 273-3400

**Harrisburg Office**

25 B East Wing  
P.O. Box 202034  
Harrisburg, PA 17120-2034

**Email:**

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@RepSummerLee



@RepSummerLee

**Web:**

www.RepSummerLee.com



Representing Pittsburgh (Parts of Greenfield & Hazelwood, Squirrel Hill South, Hays & Lincoln Place), Braddock, Braddock Hills, Chalfant, Churchill, Edgewood, Forest Hills, Homestead, North Braddock, Rankin, Swissvale, Turtle Creek, West Homestead and Wilkins Township.