

December 2020



# State Representative **Joseph C. Hohenstein** 177th Legislative District

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## Dear Neighbor,

We are all in this together. It's a phrase we have all become familiar with over the past 10 months. Together we are wearing masks, keeping social distance, and doing things like hand-washing and sanitizing common areas. We do this to protect our friends, family, loved ones, and even strangers. I appreciate everyone who continues to take the public health risks of the COVID-19 virus seriously. I feel like we in the neighborhoods of the 177th have done a good job of minimizing that risk.

I believe the scientists and health officials who tell us that the public health threat will continue even after the second wave we are experiencing now. A vaccine is on the horizon, but it is still months away for most people.

The economic threat to our families and small businesses also is in its second wave, and it needs equal attention from elected officials. Economists like Paul Krugman have identified three things we should do to alleviate the financial impact on individuals and businesses: 1) expand access to unemployment compensation; 2) provide cash for families; and 3) provide loans and other small business supports.

Neither health officials nor the economists are telling us to reopen to non-COVID circumstances. In the legislative session that just ended, there were many bills that demanded reopening, but failed to address either public health or the real economic impact of the virus. A lot of legislators, on both sides of the aisle, claimed to be standing up for the people, but their legislative proposals did not do any of the three things identified by the economists.

The unemployment system, which had been stripped down to bare bones over the past 10 years, was not buttressed. Families also did not see any additional financial supports after their initial 'stimulus' checks in April. On the final point, a lot of reopening bills claimed to support businesses, but policies favored big stores over small businesses. When programs like payroll protection (PPP) were initiated, they did not get to the Mom & Pop businesses but rather went to the Big Boxes.

It's time to give truth to the phrase "We're all in this together." In the upcoming legislative session, I will support legislation that achieves the three goals of stabilizing families' needs for housing and food in the short term, providing steady income through appropriate unemployment support, and protecting small businesses affected by COVID by ensuring they can re-open and re-start activities after the immediate crisis has passed.

I recently joined the Bipartisan Caucus chaired by Democratic Rep. Stephen Kinsey and Republican Rep. Greg Rothman and have pledged to support legislation that represents reasonable, bipartisan solutions to both the public health and economic impacts of this crisis. As a representative of the people of my district, I value the lives of my constituents and the need to protect the small businesses who are on the brink of ruin so that we get through this together and all come out of it together too.

Sincerely,



## Stay Up to Date!

For the latest on COVID-19, please check out the following resources:

**Health Department:** [health.pa.gov](http://health.pa.gov)

**Philadelphia:** [phila.gov](http://phila.gov)

**Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:** [cdc.gov](http://cdc.gov)

**My website:** [rephohenstein.com](http://rephohenstein.com)

**Greater Philadelphia Coronavirus Helpline:** 1-800-722-7112

## Unemployment and Small Business Assistance

**The Office of Unemployment Compensation:** [uc.pa.gov](http://uc.pa.gov)

Provides updated information about the compensation opportunities and unemployment programs that are available.

**PA CareerLink:** [pacareerlink.pa.gov](http://pacareerlink.pa.gov)

Allows you to search job opportunities and workforce training.

**Department of Community and Economic Development:** [dced.pa.gov](http://dced.pa.gov)

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

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

Find information on federal funding and resources.

# Putting You and Your Family First in Harrisburg



## 2019-20 LEGISLATIVE SESSION RECAP

11

BILLS INTRODUCED



647

BILLS CO-SPONSORED

1,964

VOTES TAKEN



## Legislative Update

In my first term in the Pennsylvania House, I was proud to co-sponsor dozens of bills drafted by my honorable colleagues. I was especially proud to be the prime sponsor for a number of bills that I believe would have helped to protect some of the most vulnerable populations both in my district and throughout Pennsylvania.

**H.B. 1456 would have protected our future by increasing the penalties for straw purchasing of firearms:** The practice of purchasing a firearm for another person who is legally prohibited from owning one is known as “straw purchasing” and is, to this day, behind a significant portion of the gun violence that takes place across the state. Though straw purchasing is illegal in Pennsylvania, the penalties inflicted are not harsh enough to discourage people from helping criminals and others who should not own guns. My legislation would have addressed this shortfall by inflicting harsher penalties on those who participate in this practice.

**H.B. 2669 would have protected our frontline workers:** As the virus continues to spread, the supply of personal protective equipment (PPE) remains woefully inadequate with hospital employees being asked to reuse surgical gowns and N-95 masks which are intended for single use only. In order to prepare for a resurgence of COVID-19 in Pennsylvania and to protect our hard-working frontline medical workers who put their lives on the line every day, my co-sponsor, Rep. Austin Davis and I will be reintroducing legislation to provide additional funding for PPE.

**H.B. 2391 would have protected Pennsylvania workers by ensuring paid sick leave for the entire 14-day quarantine during the COVID-19 pandemic:** It also would have covered leave time for childcare by ensuring 100% of workers’ pay. It would also have required employers to reinstate workers returning from leave. Protecting the health and wellness of not just Pennsylvanians but all Americans is of utmost importance to ensure a healthy population. Financial support often goes hand in hand with this to make sure workers are not bankrupted for protecting their health due to self-quarantine.

**H.B. 2785 would have protected the disabled by establishing a K-12 curriculum inclusive to disabled individuals:** In order to help communities foster inclusivity for disabled individuals, I introduced legislation to mandate the inclusion of the political, economic, and social contributions of disabled individuals, such as Harriet Tubman, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Stephen Hawking,

and Michael J. Fox. We can demonstrate the profound, positive impact that disabled individuals have had on our society and work to create a more tolerant and inclusive world. Every student deserves to feel safe and supported in their educational environment.

**H.B. 2083 and H.B. 2084 would have protected deaf students:** Every child deserves a high-quality education – with no exceptions. Unfortunately, deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind students often don’t receive the support they need from our educational system to achieve their full potential. I am reintroducing a two-bill package to establish a Deaf Student’s Bill of Rights and to establish a commission on deaf children to improve on our methods to ensure that our classrooms are meeting the needs of all students – including those who are deaf and hard of hearing.

**H.B. 2292 would have protected our elderly neighbors by requiring backup electric generators in nursing homes:** After reading about a terrible tragedy in Florida, I knew this was a simple solution to something that can happen anywhere. Nursing homes are especially reliant on electricity for all manner of medical equipment. When acts of God wreak havoc on our communities, power outages can quickly multiply these problems. Homeowners in more rural areas have backup generators when bad things happen. This is a commonsense solution to protect our elderly family members.

**H.B. 2104 would have protected our furry family members from extreme weather:** I have 4 dogs at home. One of the first issues that came to my office was an issue with a neighbor who was worried about a dog left out in the cold through some truly terrible weather. The response to this was inadequate. So we filled in some gaps in this proposed legislation, which would have prohibited dogs from being left outside longer than 15 minutes in temperatures above 90 and below 32 degrees, as well as enact new standards for outdoor shelters.

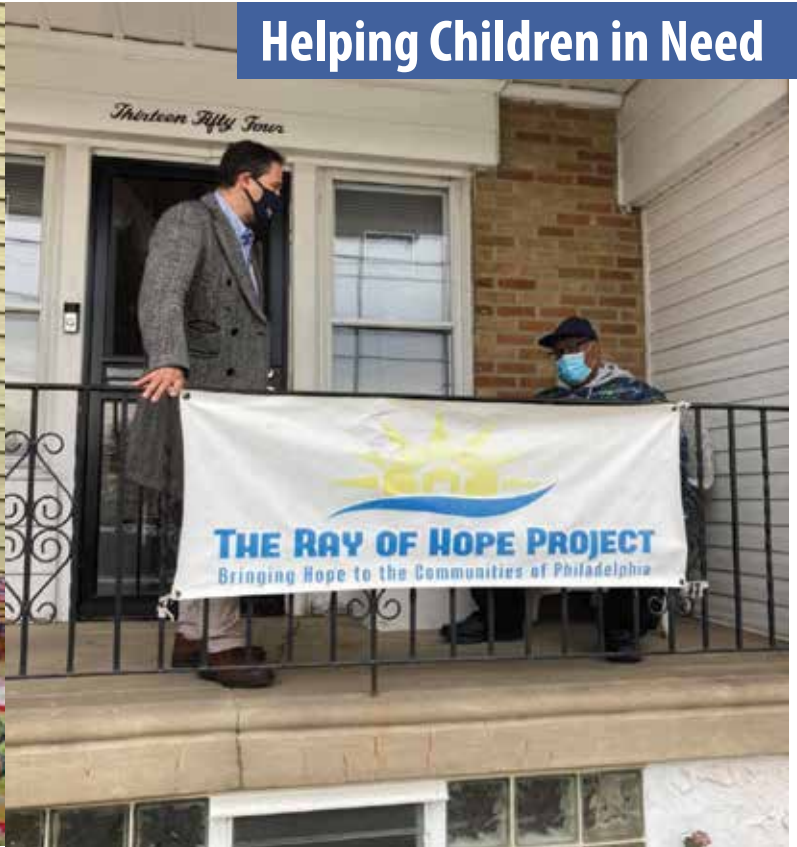
## Upcoming Events

Small Business Resource Webinar  
Monday, December 21st  
Online participation details forthcoming

Paper Shredding & E-Recycling  
Saturday, January 9  
Lincoln High School

# IN THE COMMUNITY

## Helping Children in Need



*My office and I teamed up with the Ray of Hope Project Inc., the Mother of Perpetual Help and St. Christopher's Hospital for Children to collect toys for kids in need this holiday season in December. Thank you to everyone who donated.*

## Free Food Drive and Delivery

*No one deserves to go hungry. I proudly joined Caring for Friends to deliver delicious food to our most vulnerable neighbors right before Thanksgiving.*



## Veterans and Senior BBQ



*In November, I worked with Veterans Multi-Service Center, Oak Street Health and SEPTA to safely connect our seniors and veterans with information about programs available to help them during COVID-19. We all also enjoyed a great meal on behalf of Czerw's Kielbasa at Pulaski Park.*



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## Inside:

- Upcoming events
- COVID-19 updates & resources
- First-term recap

lpo.kaf.1220

## Apply Now for Heating Assistance

The Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program is accepting applications now to help eligible homeowners and renters pay their heating bills.

Pennsylvanians can apply for LIHEAP and other public assistance programs online at [www.compass.state.pa.us](http://www.compass.state.pa.us).

Those who prefer to submit paper applications can print one from the website or request an application by phone at 1-800-692-7462 and mail it to their local County Assistance Office. You can also contact my office at (215) 744-2600 to

**2020 -21 Income Guidelines**  
for homeowners and renters

**LIHEAP**  
pennsylvania  
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

household size	Maximum Income
1	\$19,140
2	\$25,860
3	\$32,580
4	\$39,300
5	\$46,020
6	\$52,740
7	\$59,460
8	\$66,180

**Each additional person + \$6,720**

receive assistance navigating the LIHEAP application.

The Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission also offers additional services to help utility customers pay their energy bills. This information is available on the website at [www.puc.pa.gov](http://www.puc.pa.gov).

## Deadline to Enroll in Pennie is Jan. 15

**So long HealthCare.gov, hello Pennie!**

Learn more at [pennie.com](http://pennie.com) or call 1-844-844-8040

**pennie**  
gets you covered.



Pennie is PA's new health insurance marketplace, if you need to purchase individual health insurance for 2021 through the ACA.

The deadline to enroll is January 15 to start receiving coverage in February.

You can find more information on Pennie's website at [www.pennie.com](http://www.pennie.com) or call 1-844-844-8040 for help. You can also contact my office for assistance.