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State Representative | 21st Legislative District

SARA INNAMORATO



CONTINUING FORWARD IN THE AGE OF COVID-19

Hello Neighbor,

As the summer rolls toward fall, I hope that this letter finds you and your family healthy and well. This has been a difficult year for many of us. Our team has heard from people who've lost loved ones to COVID-19. We've taken phone call after phone call from stressed workers about not receiving unemployment, lost healthcare, and fear of eviction. We hear from parents about the daily stresses of caring for kids and working from home. We've heard from our main street business owners who are struggling to survive amidst doing their part to protect the public's health. Also, to be perfectly frank, our action as elected officials at the federal and state has not matched the severity of the crisis.

When COVID-19 struck our community, I was inspired by the everyday heroism I saw: in residents volunteering to help neighbors and frontline workers — healthcare workers, grocery store clerks, first responders, teachers, and so many others — braving new risks to bring us essential services. We owe them a great deal.

We have weathered several storms this summer, and in the midst of a global crisis, have been awakened to some of the inequalities in our own society, forcing difficult discussions not just in the streets or in the halls of Harrisburg, but in our own homes. These are disquieting times, which can leave us feeling adrift in a sea of anxiety and worry.

I want you to know that none of us are alone in this.

Inside this newsletter are updates on what my office and the state have done to weather the current crisis, along with resources and information from available state and federal programs. I encourage you to contact your district office at 412-781-3750, and our team of problem solvers can assist you as best we can.

I'm proud to say that since March 1, we've worked with more than 2,000 of our neighbors to navigate programs and resources, helping with everything from unemployment claims and Property Tax/ Rent Rebates to access to vital records or social services, or just listening to their thoughts on public policy. I know I wouldn't be able to sustain our work if it wasn't for all our neighbors working together.

I am proud of our community — our neighbors, main street businesses and nonprofits — and humbled to have the opportunity to represent you.

Be well, be safe,

Sincerely,

Sara and the District 21 Team



LEGISLATION UPDATE

Bills sponsored: 112

Resolutions sponsored: 41

Key legislation:

Automatic Voter Registration – Introduced as HB 1556, this legislation would automatically register people to vote, unless they opt out, when they interact with PennDOT, access Pennsylvania’s health and human services benefit programs, or any other state service.

Childcare for School Aged Children – This bill (HB 2758) would lift restrictions on childcare for school-aged children, providing flexibility for working families during the current (or future) crisis.

COVID-19 Nonprofit Assistance Program – This legislation (HB 2739) would help struggling nonprofits by creating a federally funded grant program.

Closing the Amazon Tax Loophole – This proposal would help level the playing field between corporate behemoths like Amazon and local mom and pop retailers by calculating taxes at the point of sale and not on the location of online fulfillment centers.

Baby Boxes for New Families – I’m proposing legislation that would lower infant mortality rates by providing ‘baby boxes’ to the parents of newborns. Ten other states have implemented similar programs which are shown to reduce infant mortality.

You can find information about these or other pieces of legislation I am working on at www.legis.state.pa.us.

STATE LEGISLATURE PASSES TEMPORARY BUDGET

Because the emergency funding needed to manage COVID-19 in Pennsylvania restricted the revenue necessary to put a sound, realistic budget together for the full 2020-21 fiscal year, Gov. Tom Wolf signed a five-month stopgap budget to be revisited in November. This budget includes federal CARES Act funding to help protect those most vulnerable to the virus, defend worker protections for essential employees and support our education system.

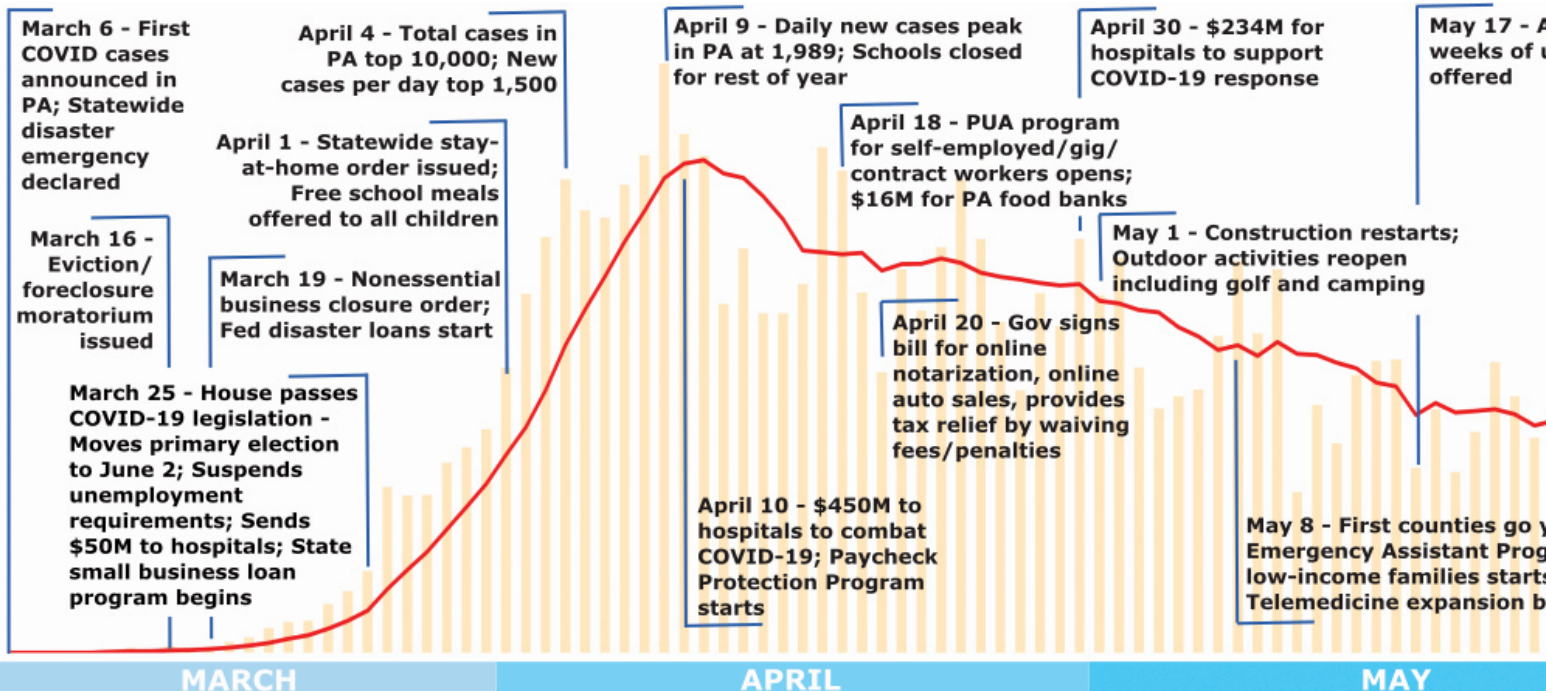


Programs funded from PA’s \$2.6 billion CARES Act include:

- \$632M for vulnerable populations (including long-term care centers and nursing homes which have been impacted the most by COVID-19).
- \$150M toward worker protections.
- \$870M for business and local services relief.
- \$347M for schools.
- \$30M to health care initiatives.
- \$225M toward food and shelter resources.

When we revisit the state budget in the fall, I will be fighting for the working people of Pennsylvania and ensure that any shortfall isn’t balanced on the backs of our students, seniors or economically disadvantaged neighbors. I’ve often said that a budget is a moral document, and in these times, we must rise to the occasion and fight for what we believe in – a society that works for everyone.

PA RESPONDS TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND TAKES DECISIVE ACTION



COVID RESOURCES

Pennsylvania took quick, decisive action to successfully slow the spread of the coronavirus in our communities. However, many of us were negatively impacted by the virus. Families lost jobs, businesses were forced to temporarily close, community resources were shut down and many limitations remain in effect today.

Our commonwealth also marshalled resources to help those affected by the pandemic, many of which are listed below. If you need help with these or any other issues, please contact my office at 412-781-2750.

FOR FAMILIES RENT/MORTGAGE ASSISTANCE AVAILABLE

The Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency recently announced that help is available for renters and homeowners financially impacted by COVID-19.

Full details on eligibility and more are available at: www.phfa.org.

FROM THE PENNSYLVANIA HOUSING FINANCE AGENCY (PHFA)
Now accepting applications from renters and homeowners.
PA Eviction and Foreclosure Protection Program

- \$175 million in housing assistance grants for renters and homeowners.
- Up to 6 months of assistance available between March 1 and December 30, 2020.
- Applications are accepted through September 30, 2020.

TO FILL OUT YOUR APPLICATION OR LEARN MORE, VISIT PHFA.ORG/PACARES

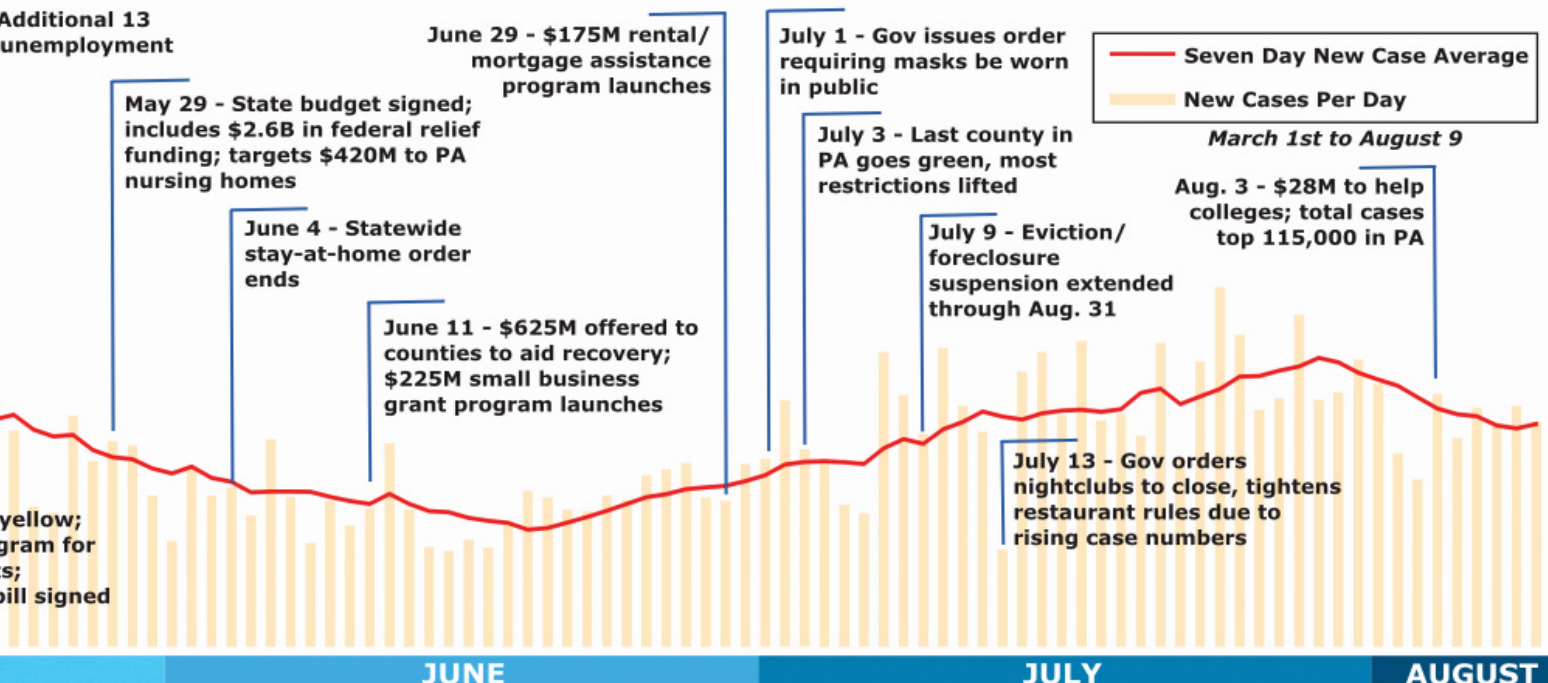
IT'S OK TO REACH OUT FOR HELP

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 new 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.



ON TO SAVE LIVES AND FLATTEN THE CURVE



LOW-INCOME HOME ENERGY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (LIHEAP) RECOVERY CRISIS

The LIHEAP Recovery Crisis program runs through Aug. 31 or until all budgeted funding is expended. More information about the LIHEAP Recovery Crisis Program, including income limits, can be found at <https://www.dhs.pa.gov/providers/Providers/Pages/LIHEAP-Recovery-Crisis-Program.aspx>.

Call 1-877-395-8930 for more information.

SENIORS' FARM MARKET VOUCHERS AVAILABLE

The annual Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program is available to eligible residents of Allegheny County. Eligible individuals may receive one set of checks worth \$24 to be spent at participating farmers markets.

The distribution of checks will not occur at senior centers. Instead, checks will be distributed by mail to eligible Allegheny County residents who complete an application. Applications may be downloaded from the website: <https://www.alleghenycounty.us/Human-Services/Programs-Services/Basic-Needs/Senior-Farmers-Market-Nutrition-Program.aspx>. Applications may also be requested by emailing AAA-SFMNP@alleghenycounty.us or by calling (412) 350-4219. Only completed applications received by Sept. 24, 2020 will be processed.

NEED CHILD CARE?

For the latest updates on what's happening with Pennsylvania's schools, visit education.pa.gov.

Child care centers were allowed to reopen, while adhering to certain restrictions and CDC guidelines, in the yellow phase. The Department of Human Services compiled answers to frequently asked questions for parents and caregivers, which you can find at dhs.pa.gov.

If you are looking for child care, visit www.findchildcare.pa.gov.

UNEMPLOYMENT

If you or someone you know lost their job during the pandemic, there are two unemployment programs available.

Traditional unemployment - <https://www.uc.pa.gov/unemployment-benefits/Pages/default.aspx>

Unemployment for self-employed, gig or contract workers - <https://www.uc.pa.gov/unemployment-benefits/file/Pages/Filing-for-PUA.aspx>.

The COVID-19 pandemic caused a historic surge in the number of people seeking unemployment compensation. Since mid-March, more than 2 million people filed for unemployment benefits. My office has helped over a thousand community members navigate the UC process since the pandemic started, and we continue to offer assistance in any way we can. If you have any questions, please feel free to reach out to my office.

SNAP - FEEDING FAMILIES

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) helps Pennsylvanians buy food. You can apply online at <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 <https://www.chipcoverspakids.com>.

FOR BUSINESSES

COVID-19 RELIEF SMALL BUSINESS ASSISTANCE GRANT PROGRAM

A website has been set up to help small businesses with a new state-run grant program. Businesses must apply through a Community Development Financial Institution. Visit <https://pabusinessgrants.com/> for resources including an application preparation checklist, eligibility details, and a full list of participating CDFIs.

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.

U.S. Small Business Administration – sba.gov

Find information on federal funding and resources.

VOTING BY MAIL WORKS – AND COULD SAVE LIVES

As the coronavirus spread across our city and state, the legislature took action to expand voting by mail. I'm proud to report that more people voted by mail in Allegheny County than in person and that our county led the way in voting by mail in Pennsylvania. However, I know that many of you who did vote in person still encountered long waits at the polls.

I'm worried about the fall – as we've seen in recent months, the coronavirus could come back at any time, putting you, your loved ones, and your neighbors at risk. That's why I'm encouraging everyone to vote by mail! It is easy, and the sooner you apply, the sooner you know your vote will be counted.

Registered voters in Allegheny County can now complete mail-in or absentee ballot applications for the Nov. 3 general election. These applications must be filed by 5 p.m. on Tuesday, Oct. 27, 2020.

Don't wait! The earlier you apply, the sooner you can be sure your vote will be counted!

For more information, visit <https://www.pavoterservices.pa.gov> or call my office at 412-781-2750 for assistance.



Voters wait to vote at a Pittsburgh-area polling station in June.

2020 GENERAL ELECTION IMPORTANT DATES

- OCT 19** Last day to register to vote for the general election.
register.votesPA.com
- OCT 27** Last day to apply for a mail-in or absentee ballot.
votesPA.com/ApplyMailBallot
- NOV 3** Voted mail-in and absentee ballots must be received by the county by 8pm.
votesPA.com/County
- NOV 3** General election day. Polls are open from 7am to 8pm.
votesPA.com/Polls

VotesPA.com

RETHINKING OFFICE OUTREACH DURING A PANDEMIC

One of the greatest challenges during this pandemic is to continue the outreach efforts of our office. Normally, our schedules are full of meetings and public hearings, where we get a chance to connect directly with our neighbors and community organizations. With social distancing protocols in effect, in-person events obviously haven't been happening to the same degree. So, we've partnered with numerous community organizations to take those conversations online, primarily using Zoom to connect.

If you haven't had the opportunity to join us, please keep an eye on my office's Facebook page for information on upcoming opportunities to connect with us! You can find us at www.facebook.com/ReplInnamorato.



State Representative

SARA INNAMORATO

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The fight against COVID-19

Plus: Legislation update

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HERE FOR YOU

The coronavirus crisis has caused disruptions to all of our lives, including your state government. Since the start of the pandemic, my office has been in contact with more than 2,000 of our neighbors, helping people access state programs, fix their unemployment problems, or point them toward other resources. Although we remain closed to walk-in visitors, my office is available by email or by phone, and appointments are available for critical issues that cannot be handled otherwise.

MY OFFICE CAN HELP YOU WITH:

- Unemployment or the PUA system
- Property Tax/Rent Rebates for seniors
- Voter registration and vote by mail
- Notary services
- Problems with the Department of Human Services (food stamps, medical and income assistance)
- Car registrations, special tags, handicap 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

If you need help with any state or government-related services, please contact my office at 412-781-2750 for assistance.

Representing parts of Pittsburgh, the boroughs of Apsinwall, Etna, Millvale, Sharpsburg and parts of O'Hara, Reserve, Ross and Shaler townships.