

# Hello and Happy Holidays!

It's hard to believe that another year is over, but it was a truly exciting year representing the people of the 20th Legislative District in the Pennsylvania House of Representatives! From passing bills in Harrisburg that will improve the lives of all Pennsylvanians to hosting free community events for local residents, my staff and I have worked hard for you throughout 2023. It continues to be the honor of my life to be entrusted to use your voice, together with the voices of all the residents of Avalon, Bellevue, Ross Township, West View, and parts of Pittsburgh, to move Pennsylvania forward. I'm incredibly proud of everything my team and I accomplished this year.



Winning the majority, even by our slim one-vote margin, has been a significant game changer in terms of what we have been able to accomplish so far this Session. Without a Republican majority standing in the way that was utterly unwilling to run bills sponsored by Democrats, we have been able to move nearly 230 bills this year alone – good bills, sponsored by both Democrats and Republicans, that will help Pennsylvanians.

This has been one of the most productive Sessions of the House in recent history. Unfortunately, the Republican-controlled Senate continues to be a roadblock to many of the important bills we have sent them – from increasing the minimum wage to commonsense firearm safety proposals to bills that would expand hate-crime protections and protect people seeking reproductive health care services in Pennsylvania by negating anti-choice policies in other states.

Despite the gridlock, for the first time ever, one of my bills became law this year. Working with state Sen. Wayne Fontana, we were able to pass S.B. 202, legislation that will enable Allegheny County land banks to clear titles for blighted properties faster – allowing us to focus on redevelopment in our communities. The bill passed the General Assembly with overwhelming bipartisan support and was signed by Gov. Josh Shapiro in July!

While my bill with Sen. Lindsey Williams (H.B. 180) to create a universal school meals program for K-12 students in Pennsylvania has yet to be considered by either chamber's Education Committee, I was proud to help secure free breakfast for public school students through this year's state budget. As House Chair of the Hunger Caucus, I was also pleased to secure increased investment in the State Food Purchase Program (SFPP) and the Pennsylvania Agricultural Surplus System (PASS), as well as increased SNAP benefits for individuals – the three most effective programs for combatting hunger in our state.

While the legislative process can be slow, I've made great progress this year on my bills to establish landslide insurance to protect property owners from the devastating costs of landslides (H.B. 589), expand access to dental care (H.B. 1417), make higher education more affordable (H.B. 897), and more. I'm optimistic that we can get these bills across the finish line, as well. You can read more about my legislation on the next page.

Here at home, my district office relocated to 658 Lincoln Avenue in Bellevue last December to better serve the newly drawn district, following redistricting. My staff and I celebrated the new location with an open house in February. If you haven't yet, stop by and be sure to say hello to our newest addition to the office – Office Pup Una!

Throughout the year, we held several free events in the district, including a document shredding event, a luncheon celebrating urban agriculture, and a senior resource fair. We also attended a myriad of other community events like farmers markets, National Night Out, and trunk-or-treats. Flip through this newsletter to catch us in action working out and about in your neighborhood.

While the years come and go, the work of elected officials is never done, and I am excited to continue serving our community in 2024. What issues are important to you? Reach out and let me know by emailing [RepKinkead@pahouse.net](mailto:RepKinkead@pahouse.net) or calling my district office at 412-321-5523. I look forward to hearing from you.

Warmly,

*Emily Kinkead*



## STATE REPRESENTATIVE EMILY KINKEAD



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# Delivering For The People

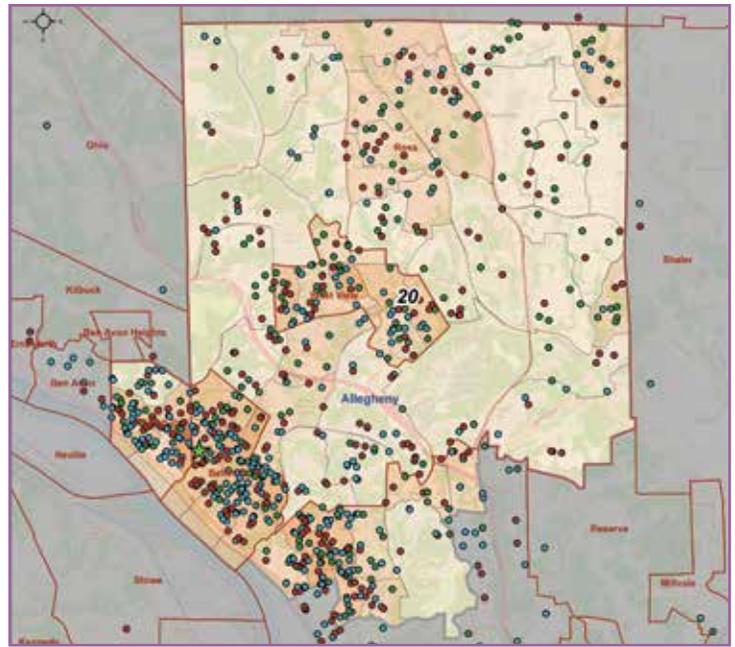
## Fighting Blight in Allegheny County



In July, Gov. Josh Shapiro signed S.B. 202 into law, legislation that Sen. Wayne Fontana and I drafted to help communities fight blight. This new law makes technical changes to allow our Allegheny County land banks to utilize the faster Sheriff Sale process in Pennsylvania, rather than

Treasurer's Sales, empowering land banks to acquire blighted properties more efficiently. I'm proud to have played a role in bringing this new law into fruition and am overjoyed at seeing it already helping reduce blight and invest in redevelopment in Allegheny County!

In a divided legislature like Pennsylvania's, getting a bill passed by both the House and Senate is a monumental task, but we did the work to gather bipartisan support for the bill to send it to the governor's desk. I can't thank Sen. Fontana enough for his partnership in getting this legislation across the finish line.



## Working For You

In 2023, my office assisted nearly 2,000 Pennsylvanians with issues ranging from unemployment and state tax concerns to PennDOT issues with licenses and peeling license plates. If you ever have questions or need assistance with any state-related issue, my staff and I are here to help you! Never hesitate to reach out by emailing [RepKinkead@pahouse.net](mailto:RepKinkead@pahouse.net) or calling 412-321-5523.

## Highlights of the 2023-24 State Budget

Here are some of the more notable provisions in the state budget that I helped secure through my work on the House Appropriations Committee:



- The second-largest increase to K-12 public education funding in Pennsylvania history, with public schools in Allegheny County receiving **\$46.2 million** more than the previous state budget.
- **\$2 million** to revive the Fresh Food Financing Initiative, providing grants and low-interest loans for the construction, rehabilitation, or expansion of grocery stores and farmers markets in food deserts throughout Pennsylvania.
- A **\$3 million** increase to the State Food Purchase Program (SFPP), which includes the Pennsylvania Agricultural Surplus System (PASS), allowing food banks to purchase food wholesale and helping our farmers connect surplus food to those struggling with food insecurity.
- **\$175 million** to fix unsafe and toxic conditions in school buildings across the Commonwealth with asbestos, leaky ceilings, and poor ventilation.
- Pennsylvania's first state budget investment in indigent defense, allocating **\$7.5 million** to help alleviate the financial burden on counties to fund public defense.
- Free school **breakfast for all Pennsylvania public school students**, including more than 146,000 students in Allegheny County.
- **\$2 million** in funding for the Pennsylvania Prison Society, the organization's first budget line item since it was founded almost 240 years ago and even though it remains the only non-governmental organization given authority in our state constitution to serve as a watchdog for all of our Pennsylvania jails and prisons.

Each week, I send out an e-newsletter with the latest information from our district and Harrisburg, plus helpful state programs and services. It's a great way to keep up with what's going on in our community and to learn about ways that my office can help you, your family, or friends.

Follow me on social media @RepKinkead and sign up for my weekly email updates at [RepEmilyKinkead.com/EmailSignUp](https://RepEmilyKinkead.com/EmailSignUp) or by scanning the QR code to the right.



# Your Voice In Harrisburg

Updates on the changes I'm fighting for at our state Capitol.

## STREAMLINING COLLEGE CREDIT TRANSFERS



### House Bill 897

*Passed the House unanimously on June 30*

Many community college students leave Pennsylvania to pursue a bachelor's degree rather than attending our state universities due to the complicated and unpredictable nature of attempting to transfer college credits. Rather than be forced to repeat courses because they were not accepted in transfer, students

are opting to pay higher out-of-state tuition rates to complete a four-year degree. I partnered with Rep. Mary Isaacson to introduce H.B. 897, a bill that would require schools within the State System of Higher Education (PASSHE) to apply credits earned at a Pennsylvania community college toward a parallel bachelor's degree program. I believe this legislation would be a win-win, encouraging more community college students to transfer to a PASSHE school and ultimately create a more affordable pathway to a four-year degree for Pennsylvania students and keeping Pennsylvania students in our great commonwealth.

## RESTORING MEDICAID COVERAGE FOR ROOT CANALS AND OTHER ESSENTIAL DENTAL TREATMENTS

### House Bill 1417

*Passed the House by a bipartisan vote of 153-50 on Dec. 13*

Everyone deserves access to basic health services, including essential dental services. However, steep cuts to Medicaid in 2011 created a situation where low-income individuals are no longer entitled to their teeth. Effectively, we have created a system where teeth are luxury bones, able to be kept only by those who can afford to, despite widespread understanding that dental health is the gateway to overall physical health.

I worked with Reps. Valerie Gaydos and Gina H. Curry to introduce H.B. 1417, a bill that would restore Medicaid coverage for root canals and other essential dental services. I am excited that this legislation has bipartisan support and has passed out of the House. I am hopeful that we will be able to send it to the governor's desk next year.



## UNIVERSAL SCHOOL MEALS FOR K-12 STUDENTS IN PA

### House Bill 180

*Referred to the House Education Committee*

While we secured universal breakfast in our 2023-24 budget, Sen. Lindsey Williams and I have been beating the universal school meals drum ever since the federal pandemic-era programs providing free breakfast and lunch expired. Those temporary programs led to a precipitous drop in student hunger, demonstrating the immense benefits of providing nutrition to students at no cost and showing the need to make these programs permanent. Based on data from the impact of these pandemic-era programs, it's clear that using tax dollars to feed kids in school would drastically improve student performance and directly combat child hunger. Quite simply, school meals are the only educational necessity that we means test before providing students with what they need to learn. We do not require students to prove need to receive textbooks or other school supplies, yet we ignore the fact that students cannot pay attention to the teacher when they are distracted by the pains of hunger. Already, more than 20 individual school districts in counties across the Commonwealth, as well as the Pennsylvania State Education Association, passed resolutions supporting my legislation with Sen. Williams, highlighting the importance of combatting childhood hunger in the classroom. I am encouraged to see growing bipartisan support for universal school meals and will continue advocating for universal school meals (breakfast and lunch) until the program is a reality for all K-12 public school students in Pennsylvania.



## PROTECTING HOMEOWNERS IMPACTED BY LANDSLIDES

### House Bill 589

*Referred to the House Environmental Resources and Energy Committee*

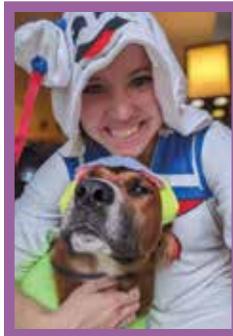
As the people of Allegheny County know, landslides are an ever-growing problem in our area and when commercial insurance fails to protect our citizens, the government needs to step in. We did that 60 years ago when we created the mine subsidence insurance fund, and it is past time to do it again for landslides. Landslide insurance currently cannot be purchased anywhere in Pennsylvania. Rep. Valerie Gaydos and I held two town halls this fall to hear directly from residents impacted by landslides and are working hard to get this bipartisan bill passed so that people in our region will have the option to buy insurance from the state to protect their property in the event of a landslide.



# Serving Our Community



My district staff grew by one this year, as Una, the First Dog of District 20, joined the team. She proved to be a great asset as she accompanied me, Bridget, Rob, Sean, and Danielle to many district events like National Night Out, our weekly table at the Bellevue Farmers Market, Halloween Trunk-or-Treats, our annual document shredding event, Ross Township Neighborhood Days, and many other events throughout the district.



## URBAN AG IN PA – SEEDS IN THE CITY

During Urban Agriculture Week over the summer, I invited PA Secretary of Agriculture Russell Redding to Pittsburgh to break bread with more than 90 local stakeholders and discuss developments around urban ag and farming in PA. We had a great week visiting urban farms here in Allegheny County and across the state alongside my colleagues on the House Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee. In the fall, I again joined Sec. Redding to celebrate grants awarded through the Pennsylvania Farm Bill to local urban farmers at Out of the End, Inc. and Oasis Farm & Fishery. Urban ag is growing stronger every day throughout Pennsylvania, making our Commonwealth's number one industry stronger, more diverse, and more robust!



## OUR THIRD ANNUAL SENIOR RESOURCE FAIR

In October, Sen. Lindsey Williams and I held our third annual Senior Resource Fair at the Ross Township Community Center, where more than 400 community members showed up to receive free flu shots and other resources. Huge thanks to our 60+ vendors for coming out, community partners at Ross Township for hosting us, and the Ross/West View EMS for providing shuttle services for the event. I hope to see you at next year's!



## MY NEW DISTRICT OFFICE IN BELLEVUE

In February, my staff and I celebrated our new district office in Bellevue, allowing us to better serve residents of the 20th Legislative District following redistricting. Our Valentine's Day-themed Grand Opening celebration was an exciting time with our neighbors and local community leaders. If you've never been to my district office, please stop by sometime to meet me and my team. I'm always eager to meet more of my constituents and learn about the issues that are important to them.



# PROGRAMS YOU MAY BE ELIGIBLE FOR

## LIHEAP

Heating bill help is available to low-income households through the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program, a state government program designed to help Pennsylvania residents keep their heat on during winter months. LIHEAP provides cash grants to help low-income households pay home heating bills, prevent energy shutoffs,

restore services, make minor energy-related home repairs, and weatherize homes to make them more energy efficient.

**Need Energy Assistance?**  
**2023-2024 LIHEAP Applications are Now Open!**

### 2023-2024 Income Guidelines

Household Size	Maximum Annual Income
1	\$21,870
2	\$29,580
3	\$37,290
4	\$45,000
5	\$52,710
6	\$60,420
7	\$68,130
8	\$75,840
9	\$83,550
10	\$91,260

Each additional person \$7,710

## SENIOR CITIZEN CONNECTCARD

Did you know that people over 65 can access public transit for free throughout our region with a Pittsburgh Regional Transit ConnectCard? My team can help you apply – just bring your identification and any existing transit passes to our office to snap a quick picture, fill out a form, and we'll contact you two weeks later to come retrieve your new pass – it's that easy! ConnectCards expire every four years, so if you already have one, you may need to reapply.



## PROPERTY TAX/RENT REBATE PROGRAM

Thanks to legislation I proudly voted for in the House, PTRR next year will be expanded to nearly 175,000 additional Pennsylvanians, and the maximum standard rebate will be increased to \$1,000 (up from \$650), helping Pennsylvania seniors, widows and widowers, and people with disabilities ease the burden of rising costs.

If you weren't previously eligible for PTRR, I encourage you to apply under the new eligibility guidelines in 2024. My team and I can help you determine your eligibility for these programs and other resources available from the state. Just give us a call!



**Quality Health Plans, Lowest Costs!**

When the unexpected happens, know you're protected!

Enroll now at [pennie.com](http://pennie.com)!

## PENNIE

If you're looking for affordable health insurance, Pennie is the place to search, offering some of the lowest rates you will find.

Pennie, Pennsylvania's official health care marketplace, is open for enrollment in health insurance coverage until Jan. 15.

More information is available online at [Pennie.com](http://Pennie.com) or through their call center at 1-844-844-8040. My office staff can also answer questions about Pennie.



## Property Tax / Rent Rebate 2024 Program Expansion

**MORE** people eligible, **MORE** money back!

Homeowner Income	Rebate	Renter Income	Rebate
Up to \$8K	\$1,000	Up to \$8K	\$1,000
Up to \$15K	\$770	Up to \$15K	\$770
Up to \$18K	\$460	Up to \$18K	\$460
Up to \$35K	\$380	Up to \$45K	\$380
Up to \$45K	\$380		

Questions? Contact my office for help receiving your refund!



658 Lincoln Ave.  
Bellevue, PA 15202

**(412) 321-5523**



- How I spent my year working for you
- Progress on my legislation
- Photo recaps from events in our community
- State programs and resources

lpo.ks.1223

## MY OFFICE CAN HELP YOU WITH:

- Unemployment
- Property tax/rent rebates for seniors
- Voter registration and vote by mail
- Problems with the Department of Human Services (food stamps, medical and income assistance)
- PennDOT documents and all kinds of state forms
- Information on financial assistance for higher education
- Birth and death certificates
- Complaints or questions about utilities and the Public Utility Commission
- Renewal of state-issued licenses or certifications

**If you need help with any state or government-related service, please contact my office by emailing [RepKinkead@pahouse.net](mailto:RepKinkead@pahouse.net) or by calling 412-321-5523.**

## SAVE THE DATE

Join me and Sen. Lindsey Williams for a free document shredding event on Saturday, March 23 at the Ross Department of Public Works. My staff and I will be on site helping folks shred paper clutter and offering tips to prevent identity theft. We'll also have the latest information on resources and programs available from the state. Contact my office with any questions about the event. I hope to see you there!

## FREE PAPER SHREDDING

**Saturday, March 23**

**10 a.m. – 1 p.m.**

Ross Department of Public Works  
225 Cemetery Ln., Pittsburgh, PA 15237

**Representing parts of Pittsburgh, Ross Township and Avalon, Bellevue and West View boroughs.**