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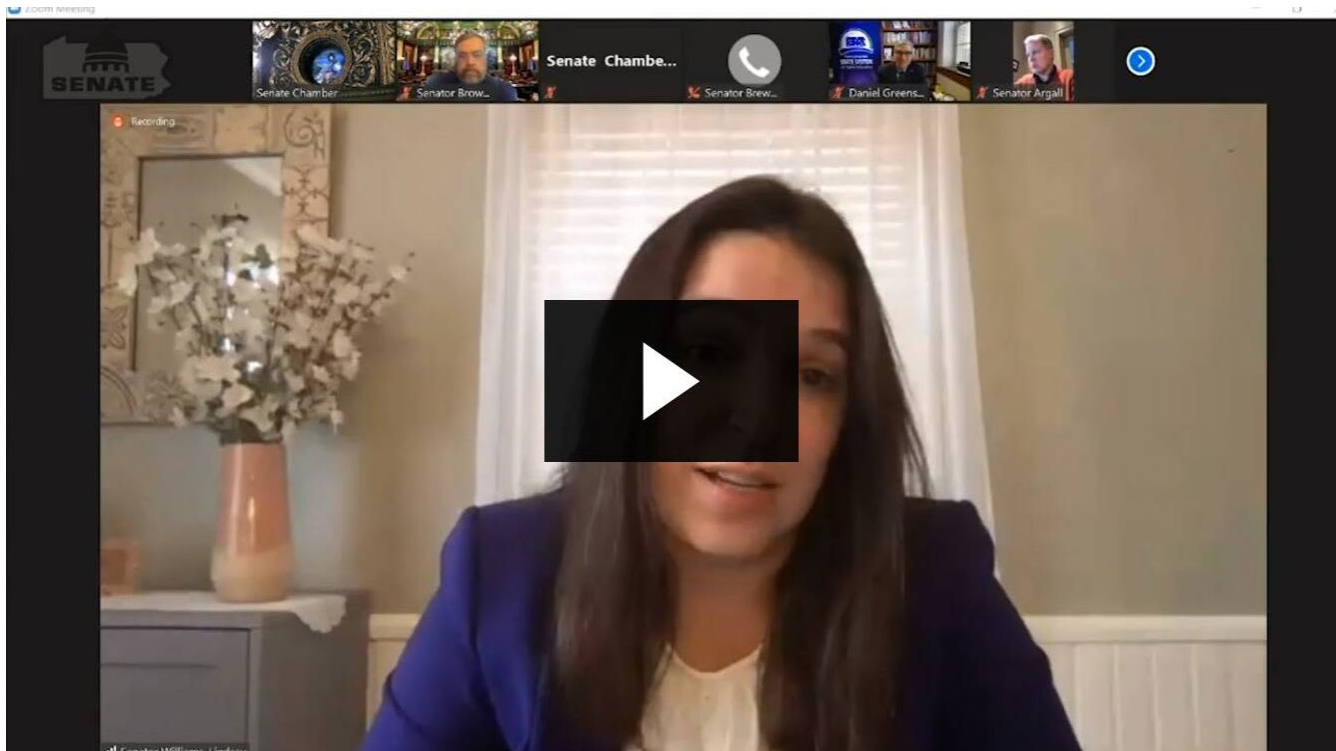
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State Senator **LINDSEY M. WILLIAMS** Your District 38 Update



Legislative Update



Senator Williams hears from PASSHE

This week, I had the opportunity to take part in a joint Senate Education and Appropriations Committee Hearing with Chancellor Daniel Greenstein of the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education (PASSHE). Chancellor Greenstein gave us his quarterly update on the PASSHE redesign, as required by Act 50. I was pleased to hear that the redesign team is seeking more input from current and prospective students-- centering our students as stakeholders in all education discussions is a major priority for me as the Minority Chair of the Education Committee. I'm still concerned about the lack of state investment in the PASSHE system, attempts to "cut" our way into economic growth, and rising tuition costs, but I'm looking forward to working with all stakeholders to ensure the success of our universities and

their communities.

Watch Entire PASSHE Hearing

COVID-19 Update



COVID-19 Vaccine News

Pennsylvania remains in the expanded 1A Phase of [Pennsylvania's COVID-19 Vaccine Plan \(pa.gov\)](#) which includes long-term care facility residents, healthcare personnel, persons 65 and older, and individuals ages 16-64 with certain medical conditions. I continue to advocate for a more transparent, clearly communicated and efficient vaccine distribution plan, which you can read about [here](#). In the meantime, we will update this section of our weekly newsletter with new resources that increase the likelihood of scheduling your vaccine appointment:

- **New.** Visit [Vaccinatepa.org](#). University of Pittsburgh student volunteers created this website to help Pennsylvanians get vaccinated as easily as possible. Information on specific locations that have vaccine inventory is available to make scheduling efficient. Visit the website [here](#).
- **New.** Consider joining [Getting Pittsburgh Vaccinated - COVID-19 Appointment Tip Page | Facebook](#). This facebook group collects information on how to get a COVID-19 vaccine. Visit the page [here](#).
- Subscribe to Allegheny Alerts. You can customize your subscription to include alerts from Allegheny County's Health Department on vaccine availability. Sign up for Allegheny Alerts [here](#).
 - **New:** Allegheny Alerts now sends notifications for telephone vaccine appointment availability through the United Way of Southwestern Pennsylvania 2-1-1.
- Regularly visit [COVID-19 Vaccine Information | COVID-19 | Health Department | Allegheny County](#). Here you can schedule an appointment with the County Health

Department's Monroeville clinic.

- PA Department of Health, [Where Can I Get Vaccinated?](#) Use this tool to zoom in on a map of vaccine providers in your area. Click on the location for contact information to schedule an appointment.
- Continually check with local health systems, pharmacies, or federally funded community clinics who are scheduling their own appointments.

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Senate of Pennsylvania

February 8, 2021

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STATE GOVERNMENT,
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The Honorable Tom Wolf
Governor of Pennsylvania
508 Main Capital Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Dear Governor Wolf:

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, your office announced a reprieve program in April to prevent the prison sentences served by those who are incarcerated from becoming unintended death sentences. We appreciate your leadership in acting swiftly to mitigate the spread of an unknown and acute disease within our correctional facilities. Unfortunately, your executive action – originally intended to release more than 1,200 people – has only resulted in 159 releases.

Since that time the virus has become more dangerous and a greater threat to our communities. A growing volume of reporting has made clear the worsening conditions within our correctional facilities. While your initial action to offer reprieve was prudent and lifesaving, the death count reported by the Department of Corrections now exceeds one per day. A person's fundamental right to be safe and free from disease does not stop at the prison wall.

At the end of 2020, a total of 84 inmates had died because of the virus. Of those who had died, more than 90% were 50+ years old, consistent with reports of the virus being most deadly for those who are elderly and those with comorbidities like cardiovascular disease, diabetes, chronic respiratory illness, hypertension, and cancer. In the first 20 days of 2021, at least 27 people incarcerated in Pennsylvania's state prisons and two staff members died of coronavirus. This exceeds the total number of fatalities in prisons between March and November of 2020. By the time you read this letter, more men and women will have died within our correctional facilities. Their deaths were preventable. We call on you to recommit to use your singular power of reprieve to save lives.

Greater structural changes, like medical parole, are needed to address the aging and medically

vulnerable populations of the incarcerated, but legislation will languish and each day brings another preventable death from COVID-19. This health crisis demands immediate and expedient action to prevent further loss of life. Reprieve is the only measure that currently exists to immediately reduce the prison population to protect and preserve the lives of incarcerated people.

Even with Department of Corrections policy providing for social distancing and increased sanitation, state prisons are no place for our vulnerable population. Movement in and out of these facilities and possible infections being brought in by staff create epicenters of spread. On January 7th, 2021, Secretary of Corrections John Wetzel testified on the spread of COVID-19 at a Senate Democratic Policy Committee hearing that “we cannot stop its spread.” As we have witnessed in California, outbreaks in correctional facilities don’t only place the lives of those who are confined at great risk – the health emergency can easily spread beyond the prison walls and gravely affect the surrounding community.

While reprieve is imperfect, as time served outside will not count toward a sentence, it will prevent the further loss of life and mitigate the spread of the virus within our correctional facilities and communities. Every incarcerated person who is at risk of death should be given the option for reprieve and notified accordingly. The decision to accept reprieve or risk contracting the virus should be weighed by those who must face this risk. Furthermore, the Senate Democratic Policy Committee recommends bringing inmates who have been granted reprieve before the Board of Pardons to have their sentence commuted to mitigate the concern of uncounted time.

The Department of Corrections currently incarcerates approximately 47,000 people in state prisons and community corrections centers. Many of these people are elderly or have health conditions that put them at greater risk of hospitalization and death should they become infected with COVID-19. Without your immediate action, further loss of life is inevitable.

We realize the challenges stemming from the virus are unprecedented, and you have navigated this crisis well given the impossible circumstances. As members of the Senate Democratic Caucus and members of the House Democratic Caucus, and with support from the Legislative Black Caucus, we are committed to working with you on behalf of all constituents we serve. We call on you to once again utilize the power of reprieve granted by The Pennsylvania Constitution to continue to protect our communities.

Joint Letter to Governor Wolf Urges Use of Reprieve

Pennsylvania’s correctional institutions now see a death rate from COVID-19 three times that of the general population. In response, on February 8, 2021 Senator Williams and nearly three dozen Democratic Senators and State Representatives issued a [joint letter](#) to Governor Tom Wolf, urging him to utilize his power of reprieve to immediately release incarcerated people who are elderly or medically vulnerable.

Unemployment Compensation Update

UPDATES ON PUA PROGRAM

February 8, 2021



Citizenship Issue - claimants who never reported they were a permanent resident has been resolved.



Funds were released for claimants who previously filed for the weeks of Jan 2, 9, and 16.

**New claims
filed in 2021**

The benefit payment audit message will be removed and claimants will receive the next steps in their dashboard.

The benefit payment audit messages will stay on all out of state claims > eligibility issue

PUA Fixes and Issues

Long awaited funds were released for PUA claimants who previously filed for the weeks of Jan 2, 9 and 16. PUA claimants who were experiencing a USCIS issue related to residency (permanent resident versus U.S. citizen) are being worked on.

If you applied for PUA after December 27, the Department of Labor and Industry has added your 2020 base year. New claimants will receive individual messaging on next steps through the PUA dashboard. Once verified and any outstanding issues are resolved, payments will be released.



Unemployment Recipients Must Have a 1099G to File 2020 Taxes

If you are among the hundreds of Pennsylvanians who filed for unemployment for the first time in 2020, you may be unaware that unemployment payments are taxable. Also, it is possible you could still owe more in taxes, even if you already elected to withhold 10% of your payments for taxes. As you prepare to file your 2020 tax return be sure to include payments from your 1099G form mailed by The Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry (L&I) in January.

If you collected regular Unemployment Compensation (UC, PEUC, EB) you should have received a **UC-1099G**. If you collected Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) you should have received a **PUA-1099G**. These forms reflect your **gross** unemployment payments reported to the IRS from UC, PEUC, EB, FPUC, LWA, and PUA combined. Follow the steps below if you encounter problems with your 1099G:

If you did not receive your 1099G in the mail, you can download a copy:

- The UC-1099G form is available on the claimant UC dashboard on the uc.pa.gov site.
- The PUA-1099G form is available on the claimant PUA dashboard.

If you believe your 1099G form is incorrect:

- For Regular UC, requests for corrected UC-1099G should be submitted through a state legislative office. The request must include a copy of the “incorrect” UC-1099G and an explanation of what they believe it should be.
 - Errors on the UC-1099G are rare. Be sure to account for all **gross** payments from UC, PEUC, EB, FPUC, and LWA combined when verifying reported payment totals.
 - Call us at 412-364-0469 or email us at SenatorLindseyWilliams@pasenate.com to have our staff request a UC-1099G correction.
- For PUA, you must submit a request for a corrected PUA-1099G through this link: <https://expressforms.pa.gov/apps/pa/DLI/PUA-1099G-Inquiry>.

1099G and fraudulent claims:

- Because 1099G forms are automatically generated for all claimants receiving unemployment compensation payments, the receipt of a 1099 form by a person who didn't file for unemployment indicates a case of identity fraud.
- Immediately report the fraud to the Department through the following link: <https://www.uc.pa.gov/pages/report-fraud-here.aspx> so L&I can correct the income with the IRS and prevent any issues with the victim's taxes.

Out of State Fraud:

- Given the level of fraud nationwide, it may not be unusual for PA residents to receive a 1099G from another state.

If you did not file in or receive UC benefits from that state, it would appear you are a victim of identity theft and UC fraud.

- You should contact that state immediately and report the fraud.
- A simple Google search of state name and UC 1099G Fraud will likely result in a match for reporting such issues in that state.

Tax Information

INTRODUCING MYPATH

A NEW ONLINE FILING SYSTEM FOR PA TAX RETURNS

myPATH is a free, user-friendly system that allows taxpayers to seamlessly file the Pennsylvania Income Tax Return (PA-40) and make income tax payments, as well as offering other services.

 **Learn more at**
mypath.pa.gov



You Can File Your PA Return Online!

Remember taxpayers interested in filing their Pennsylvania returns can do so immediately by visiting the new free electronic filing option available at mypath.pa.gov. myPATH is accepting 2020 returns and payments.

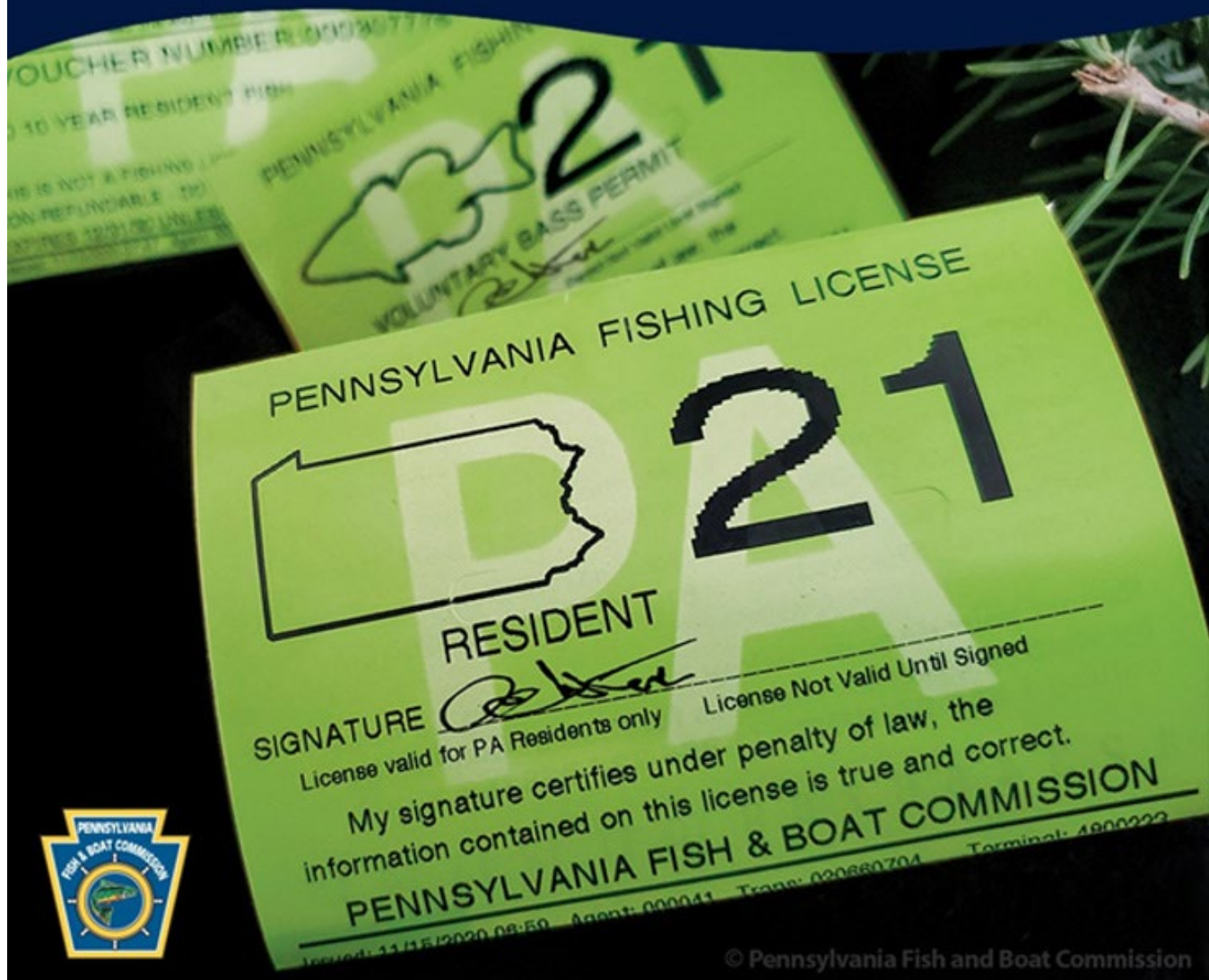


Snow Removal Issues?

Snow and ice removal issues on your road? Visit <http://alleghenycounty.us/whoplowsmyroad> to find out whom to call.

Good News

NEW Green Licenses



New Licensing Licensing Platform

I serve on the Game and Fisheries Committee and am happy to announce Game & Fish and Boat Commission's joint launch of www.HuntFish.pa.gov, a new mobile friendly platform to renew fishing, boating, and hunting licenses. Also, if you get a license in person it will be printed on new green paper instead of yellow! You can visit the new site and renew your licenses [here](#).

As always, please feel free to reach out with any questions you may have by phone at 412-364-0469 (Ross Office), 724-224-2131 (Harrison Office) or by email at SenatorLindseyWilliams@pasenate.com. My staff will return your call/email within 24 hours

(Monday-Friday).



Senator Lindsey Williams

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