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Please do not reply to this email. You can reach my office by emailing [senatorlindseywilliams@pasenate.com](mailto:senatorlindseywilliams@pasenate.com).

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



## Upcoming Event



### Education Committee Hearing on COVID-19 Impacts

On March 3, 2021 from 10am – 1pm the Senate Education Committee will hold a Hearing to discuss the impacts that COVID-19 has had on K-12 education. The hearing will include testimony from a local parent, teacher, and school board member.

You can watch the live stream of the event at <https://www.senatorlindseywilliams.com/live/>

# Legislative Update



## PA Standardized Testing: Request That President Biden Waive Federal Requirements

As co-chairs of the Senate Education Committee, Senator Scott Martin and I asked President Joe Biden to waive the standardized testing requirements for federal aid to Pennsylvania schools for the 2020-2021 school year. Waiving the testing requirement would remove additional stress on our already overwhelmed students and teachers, who have been forced to navigate an ever-changing school landscape and vastly different learning models due to Covid-19.

Our request is based upon feedback from numerous concerned parents, students, teachers, and school administrators. They agree that our top priority should be to enable teachers to provide students the learning support they need as we begin to return to in-person learning. Many school districts have indicated that Covid-19 mitigation measures will require a significantly longer testing timeframe than the current six-week allotment. This would further limit the precious amount of instruction time teachers have with students.

Instruction time should not be traded for assessments that only create additional stress. Our teachers and children should instead be allowed to use this time to focus on building the knowledge, skills, and sense of community that may have been lost during the pandemic. We're all concerned about how much learning has been missed during this unprecedented period. But there is a danger in rushing to evaluate before we've made the effort to treat our children like human beings who need care and nurturing first. Students are not data points in a funding formula. They are people coping with a turbulent, confusing time and we need to give them some sense of stability before we thrust additional pressure on them in the name of

determining what schools “deserve” more funding.

Federal funding linked to testing is aimed at identifying inequities in our education system. But we know where those inequities are and how we can begin to invest in repairing them. Additional testing requirements at this time will only hinder this effort.

To read the letter to President Biden click [here](#).

## COVID-19 Update



### Vaccine Resource Information

This section of the newsletter is updated weekly with vaccine appointment resources:

#### ***New!***

**All vaccine providers are required to list a dedicated phone number** for vaccine appointments by order of the Pennsylvania Department of Health (DOH). This is a welcome change for Pennsylvanians who lack access to a computer or smartphone.

#### ***New!***

Go to [VaxxMax](#), an independent website that provides regularly updated **Rite Aid** and **Walgreens** vaccine slots by state. This is a grassroots website created to help streamline the vaccine process in the absence of state-wide systems.

- You must first pre-qualify on Rite Aid’s scheduler [here](#) or Walgreens vaccine slot finder [here](#). When you find an available location on VaxxMax in Pennsylvania you can copy/paste on the Rite Aid or Walgreens page for scheduling.

### **Call PA Link for Vaccine Appointment Assistance by Phone:**

- **1-800-753-8827:** PA Link provides assistance to seniors and the disabled and is taking calls from those without access to a computer. Operators will assess the caller's situation, offer guidance and transfer to a scheduling team. For callers with transportation needs, PA Link will also be able to contact partners with their local Area Agency on Aging to assist with coordinating rides.

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### **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](#).
- **Note:** Allegheny Alerts now sends notifications for **telephone vaccine appointment** availability through the United Way of Southwestern Pennsylvania 2-1-1.

### **Register for UPMC's COVID-19 Vaccine Waitlist:**

- By phone: 1-844-UPMCVAC (844-876-2822), 7 a.m. and 7 p.m., seven days a week.
- Online: [UPMC | COVID Vaccine Form](#). Call or register online for UPMC's vaccine waitlist. You will be contacted when a vaccine is available. Open to the general public.

### **Sign up for the PA Department of Health's "Your Turn" Eligibility Tool:**

- Online only: [Your-Turn](#). This is not a waitlist, but a state-wide registry that alerts you when you are eligible for the vaccine.

### **Visit [Vaccinatepa.org](https://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](#).

### **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.**

## Unemployment Compensation Update

A blue rectangular graphic with white text. At the top, there are seven white chevron arrows pointing to the right. Below the arrows, the text reads: "Who is eligible for MIXED EARNERS UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION?". The words "MIXED EARNERS" are in a larger, bold, blue font, while the rest of the text is in white.

### INDIVIDUALS MUST:

- Be receiving an unemployment benefit from a program other than Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA).
- Be receiving an unemployment benefit for claims week(s) covered by the MEUC program, which are January 2, 2021 through March 13, 2021.
- Have at least \$5,000 in net income from self-employment in the applicable tax year.
- Apply for the MEUC program and submit documentation which clearly shows \$5,000 net income.

**NOTE:** Your self-employment income will be checked against L&I's records and shared with the PA Department of Revenue. Any self-employment not previously disclosed may be investigated.

INFORMATION AND UPDATES  
[www.uc.pa.gov](http://www.uc.pa.gov)

## New Mixed Earners Unemployment Compensation (MEUC) Program -- Application Deadline March 12, 2021

We included this announcement in last week's newsletter but thought we should run it again

for readers who may have missed it.

If you filed for traditional Unemployment Compensation and were unable to include self-employment income in your base year you may qualify for the new [MEUC Program](#). MEUC compensates workers with multiple sources of income with an extra \$100 weekly benefit between January 2, 2021 and March 13, 2021.

### MEUC Eligibility Requirements

- You must be receiving an unemployment benefit from a program other than Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA).
- You must be receiving an unemployment benefit for claims week(s) covered by the MEUC program, which are January 2, 2021 through March 13, 2021.
- You must have at least \$5,000 in documented net income from self-employment during the most recent taxable year.
- You must apply for the MEUC program and submit documentation which clearly shows \$5,000 net income.

### Apply Online:

- Log in as if you are filing biweekly claims at [uc.pa.gov](http://uc.pa.gov).
- Click the “MEUC” button and follow the instructions to submit your application.
- Choose the option to upload self-employment financial documentation within the application.
- If you do not have your documents ready at the time of application, you will be able to upload them later.
- **The deadline set by the federal government to submit all MEUC online applications and required documentation is Friday, March 12, 2021.**

### Apply by mail:

- Include the required documentation with your mailed application.
- Mail your application to:

Department of Labor & Industry  
1316 State Street  
Erie, PA 16501

- Paper MEUC applications and required documentation must be postmarked by Saturday, March 13, 2021, per the federal government.



## PPP Small Business Loans Revised for Smaller Minority Firms

If you own a small business and were unable to secure a CARES Act Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loan in the first two application periods, you should consider trying again. President Biden authorized changes to PPP this week to try to reach smaller, minority-owned firms and sole proprietors left behind in previous rounds of aid. PPP loans are designed to provide a direct incentive for small businesses to keep their workers on the payroll. The Small Business Administration (SBA) will forgive loans if all employee retention criteria are met, and the funds are used for eligible expenses.

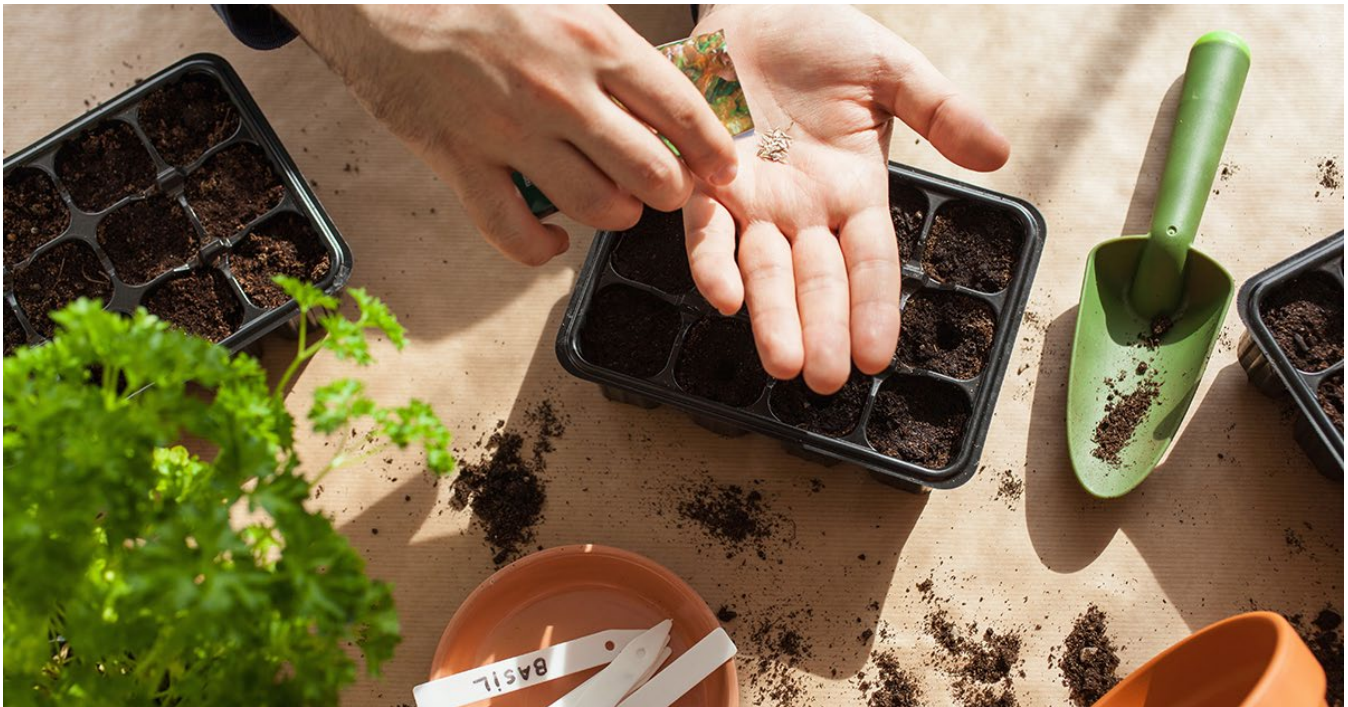
For two weeks starting Wednesday, February 24, 2021 the Small Business Administration will only accept applications for forgivable PPP loans from firms with fewer than 20 employees to ensure that they are not crowded out by larger firms. Changes to the PPP include:

- Inclusion of sole proprietors, independent contractors, and self-employed people such as house cleaners and personal care providers — that could not qualify previously because of business cost deductions.
- PPP will set aside \$1 billion for businesses without employees in low- and moderate-income areas, which are 70% owned by women and people of color.
- Guidance clarification that legal U.S. residents who are not citizens, such as green card holders, cannot be excluded from the program.
- Elimination of exclusions that prohibit a business owner who is delinquent on student loans from participating in the program.
- Business owners with non-fraud felony arrests or convictions in the previous year are excluded from the program, but Biden administration officials said they will adopt bipartisan Senate proposals to remove this restriction -- unless the applicant is currently

incarcerated.

Updated information on PPP loans and how to apply can be found [here](#).

## Good News



### Triboro Gardens Seed Swap!

Spring will be here before you know it. Get a jump on the season and some inspiration at the Triboro Gardens Seed Swap. This is a neighborly vegetable and flower seed swap and is an opportunity to participate in the Seedling Foster Program from the Millvale Garden.

- Where: The Garden of Etna, 25 Locust Street.
- When: Saturday, February 27, 2021 from 10 am - 1 pm. (Rain date Sunday, February 28, 2021).
- If you bring seeds packets must be labeled.
- Masks and social distancing required.
- One parking spot reserved for contactless drop off and pick-up service.

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](mailto:SenatorLindseyWilliams@pasenate.com). My staff will return your call/email within 24 hours



(Monday-Friday).



Senator Lindsey Williams

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