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August 24, 2020

Secretary Dennis Davin
Department of Community and Economic Development
400 North Street, 4th Floor
Commonwealth Keystone Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Dear Secretary Davin:

We are writing to express concern over the limited eligibility of the COVID-19 Hazard Pay Grants that your department awarded this week. While we are grateful for the temporary pay bump coming to thousands of frontline workers across Pennsylvania, we cannot ignore the many industries and employees left out. Our first responders – police, fire and EMS – as well as healthcare workers like pharmacy technicians and the Red Cross have been risking their lives throughout this pandemic, yet were not eligible for the hazard pay grants.

We understand that this program – as with many grants – had limited funding available and that eligibility restrictions had to be put in place. Still, some supermarkets and small grocery stores that were eligible did not receive hazard pay funding for their workers. Meanwhile, other workers deemed “essential” in March and April struggle to understand why they have been excluded from that category now.

During the pandemic, EMS workers, often accompanied by police or firefighters, rushed into private homes to treat ailing COVID patients and transport them safely to a hospital, yet they were not eligible for hazard pay. Pharmacy technicians serving a customer at a supermarket pharmacy were ineligible for hazard pay while cashiers serving that same customer, at a grocery checkout just feet away, were eligible. These people are also on the frontlines and should be similarly valued.

As the legislature and administration negotiate the allocation of remaining CARES Act funding, and any future federal funding, we urge consideration of another hazard pay program to capture these worthy workers who have put their own safety on the line in order to take care of others. Our first responders and frontline workers certainly deserve our support.

Sincerely,

Rep. Frank Burns
72nd Legislative District

Rep. Ryan Bizzarro
3rd Legislative District

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