



Summer
2020

State Representative | 157th Legislative District

MELISSA L. SHUSTERMAN

District Offices:

42 E. Lancaster Ave., Unit A | Paoli, PA 19301 | (484) 200-8260
1501 Egypt Rd. | Oaks, PA 19456 | (484) 200-8260

Capitol Office:

111B East Wing | P.O. Box 202157 | Harrisburg, PA 17120-2157 | (717) 787-7524

www.RepShusterman.com | @RepShusterman



Dear Neighbor,

These last few months have been far from easy for Pennsylvanians. I recognize the sacrifices you've made to mitigate the spread of COVID-19, from social distancing to wearing masks, and I sincerely thank you. As a result of everyone's efforts, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recognized our commonwealth for successfully flattening the curve. According to their recent analysis, Pennsylvania was one of only three states with a 42-day steady decline in cases, joining Hawaii and Montana.

Although we're now in the Green Phase, the pandemic isn't over yet. Since March, I've been fighting in Harrisburg for resources to preserve Pennsylvanians' health, small businesses' success and health care workers' well-being, and I will continue to do so until COVID-19 is no longer a serious threat to public health.

As your voice in Pennsylvania's Capitol, I wanted to share an update with you on how I've voted, legislation I'm drafting, news on police reform and Pennsylvania's temporary budget, as well as resources that I hope you find useful.

Sincerely,

State Rep. Melissa Shusterman – 157th Legislative District



As a member of the House Judiciary Committee, I voted in favor of these bills both in committee and in the House chamber.

REFORMING PENNSYLVANIA'S POLICE FORCE

In wake of the unjust death of George Floyd, we've seen protests erupt across the nation calling for a change in our country's policing practices, including right here our commonwealth. In June, the House and Senate unanimously passed two pieces of legislation that would update our police training and prevent officers with a checkered past from transferring to different departments. Gov. Wolf signed both pieces of legislation into law on July 14. These new laws are the most significant police reform measures that Pennsylvania has seen in the last several decades.

- **House Bill 1910** enacted mandatory police training on the use of force, de-escalation techniques, cultural awareness and bias; and was amended to include training on trauma-informed care, specifically PTSD. Officers are also required to undergo training on how to recognize the earliest signs of child abuse and make them fully aware of reporting requirements.
- **House Bill 1841** expands background checks for police and other law enforcement officers, and was amended to create a confidential repository of employment records relating to misconduct.

There are still 17 police reform bills that need to be brought into the House chamber for a full vote, some dated as early as January 2019. Systemic racism, implicit biases and police brutality are all issues that have gone unaddressed in Pennsylvania for far too long, but moving these bills is a major step toward starting a dialog and saving lives throughout the commonwealth.



I marched with Black Lives Matter protesters demanding justice for George Floyd in both Phoenixville and Tredyffrin. I am so proud of the students who organized both of these marches and called for long overdue change.

UPDATED NURSING HOME GUIDANCE

The Pennsylvania Departments of Health and Human Services released updated guidance to loosen restrictions on long-term care facilities throughout the commonwealth. As of July 17, long-term care facilities may return to activities, welcome visitors and hold other events for residents as long as a specific list of prerequisites are met to ensure worker and resident safety, as long as there are no new COVID-19 cases among staff and residents for 14 consecutive days.

This is a cause that I've advocated for throughout the governor's COVID-19 disaster declaration. I've worked with the Pennsylvania Department of Health and the PA House Aging Committee to ensure that these facilities could reopen as quickly and safely as possible so that families can be reunited during this difficult time.

To learn more about the updated guidance, visit bit.ly/38zy6Ug.

HELP FOR SMALL BUSINESSES

I've spoken with many small business owners throughout the district who have consistently expressed that more assistance needs to be available for their livelihoods to survive this difficult time. I brought your concerns to the state legislature and I'm proud to share that more help is here.

Pennsylvania's new Small Business Assistance Grant Program allocates \$225 million in federal CARES Act funding to help business owners offset the severe financial impacts brought on by COVID-19. This program will award grants of up to \$50,000 to small businesses with 25 employees or fewer. Funding may be used toward payroll costs, mortgage interest, rent or utility payments, or other COVID-19-related expenses, such as purchasing specialized equipment, barriers, or employee training to ensure compliance with state and federal CDC guidelines for reopening.

There will be multiple application windows for this program. The first round opened June 30 and was open for 10 business days; applications will continue to be accepted after that for future rounds of funding. To learn more about the program, view a full list of participating CDFIs or start your application, visit pabusinessgrants.com.

Small Business Relief for those impacted by COVID-19

- ✔ \$100 million for small (25 or fewer employees, less than \$1 million in revenue), main street businesses that were hurt because of COVID-19
- ✔ \$100 million for historically disadvantaged businesses
 - For PA businesses with 25 or fewer employees and which is owned, managed, and operated by those in socially & economically disadvantaged groups.

APPLICATION WINDOW IS NOW OPEN

Customer-facing businesses (barbers, salons, retailers, restaurants, day care, gym, food and hospitality, and others) are especially encouraged to apply.

Get more info  [PAbusinessgrants.com](https://pabusinessgrants.com)

For some businesses, I know that this funding may not be enough. That's why I've introduced legislation to help Pennsylvania's smallest businesses survive this public health crisis. My two bills seek to help the most vulnerable businesses throughout the commonwealth:

- **House Bill 2249** would create a grant program open exclusively to Pennsylvania's mom and pop shops with five employees or less.
- **House Bill 2535** would provide technical support and guidance for Pennsylvania's micro-businesses, consisting of five or fewer employees, to help them expand their online storefronts.



VOTING TO SAFELY REOPEN PENNSYLVANIA

When Gov. Wolf announced the statewide stay-at-home order in March, the legislature had to determine how we can safely move forward and reopen our economy. Since this was uncharted territory for everyone, we had to approach this as logically, methodically and creatively as possible. COVID-19 remains a serious risk to some of our most vulnerable residents, but we were able to implement some solutions to avoid a complete economic shutdown and ensure small businesses can stay afloat.

I voted YES on the following:

- **House Bill 2429**, which aimed to reopen garden centers through the commonwealth and provide workers with clean working conditions, hazard pay, PPE and paid sick leave.
- **House Bill 2506**, which aimed to allow restaurants in Yellow and Green Phase counties to serve customers outside.

I also led efforts in the House to safely reopen the **real estate** industry by penning a letter to the governor outlining desired safety measures so services could resume, even in red phase counties. I co-sponsored legislation to reopen the industry and spoke with many real estate professionals throughout the district, then brought their ideas and concerns directly to the governor.



SUPPORTING THOSE WHO CARE FOR OUR LOVED ONES



Throughout the COVID-19 public health crisis, millions of Pennsylvanians depended on health care workers or direct support professionals to preserve their health or help them beat this deadly virus. Like most Pennsylvanians working throughout the pandemic, these essential employees' stresses only grew.

Their job is to care not only for the ill, but also people with intellectual disabilities or autism, individuals with physical disabilities and seniors. They remain dedicated, despite their wages barely keeping them out of poverty. Many times, this was all even for miniscule wages just barely keeping them out of poverty. Many lives were at stake when Pennsylvania's cases of COVID-19 peaked, and it's possible for us to experience a second wave come fall.

That's why I introduced three pieces of legislation prioritizing these life-saving workers to ensure that they could give our loved ones the best care possible while also providing for their own families.

My bills seek to achieve the following:

- Provide more affordable public transportation for caretakers of individuals with disabilities and the elderly. This would ensure that transportation expenses do not deter these workers from providing the care that these individuals need, especially during a pandemic.
- Establish a grant program for the commonwealth's nonprofit organizations, such as the ARC and Goodwill Industries, funded by the federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act. This would ensure that these organizations have the tools that they need to survive the COVID-19 crisis and continue caring for our loved ones.
- Grant student loan forgiveness to health care workers and private care employees on the front lines fighting COVID-19. While many of us stay safe at home, these individuals potentially expose themselves to the virus every day, risking their own health, in order to save lives.

MAKE YOUR OWN SPOTTED LANTERNFLY TRAP

As summer continues, we will once again see an abundance of adult spotted lanternflies. To help fight the intruders, Penn State's College of Agricultural Science and the Penn State Extension shared instructions for a DIY trap designed to catch these invasive pests all season long.

The circle trap is made of mesh and completely wraps around the tree. As spotted lanternflies climb the tree, the mesh guides them up and into a collection bag where they are unable to escape. To learn more, visit bit.ly/3dlt2nD.





State Representative
MELISSA L. SHUSTERMAN

42 E. Lancaster Ave., Unit A
Paoli, PA 19301

Keeping Up with Shusterman!

@RepShusterman

/RepShusterman

www.RepShusterman.com

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VOTE BY MAIL

For the first time, Pennsylvanians were able to vote by mail in the June 2020 primary. This is a secure, convenient, and safe option to ensure that your voice is heard from the comfort of your own home. Since we're not sure what the fall will bring in regard to COVID-19, I highly encourage utilizing this option for the General Election in November. You can apply for a mail-in ballot online, no excuse is required, or contact my office for a paper application.

STATE LEGISLATURE PASSES TEMPORARY BUDGET

Gov. Wolf signed a temporary budget in May to last Pennsylvania five months, with the exception of fully funding education at the prior year levels. This direction was arrived at because the COVID-19 health crisis restricted the revenue necessary to put a sound, realistic budget together for the full 2020-21 fiscal year. We will revise this spending plan in November.

The current budget includes federal CARES Act funding to help protect those most vulnerable to the virus, defend worker protections for essential employees and provide for our education system. Additionally, we were able to correct a \$300M deficit in property tax relief in order to make the full property tax relief payment to school districts and homeowners as in prior years.

From the \$2.6 billion CARES Act funding, the following money has been earmarked to directly offset the ravaging effect COVID-19 is taking on Pennsylvania.

- \$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

Additionally, through separate legislation, we were also able to provide \$500 million to Pennsylvania's long-term care providers and \$50 million in direct financial relief to fire and EMS companies.

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

LIHEAP provides assistance for home energy bills and normally runs from November through March, but the Recovery Crisis program can help with Pennsylvanians' current energy costs, including critical air conditioning during the summer months. Assistance is available for both renters and homeowners.

LIHEAP Recovery Crisis benefits may be available if a household:

1. Has their main or secondary energy source completely shut off.
2. Is notified that their utility service will be shut off in the next 60 days.
3. Has broken energy equipment or leaking lines that must be fixed or replaced.
4. Is in danger of being without fuel in 15 days or less.

5. Owes funds to a utility provider that would constitute a service termination if not for the Public Utility Commission's moratorium on terminations.

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