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DEPARTMENT OF AGING



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DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

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Wolf Administration Calls on General Assembly to Invest in Older Pennsylvanians, Individuals with Disabilities Through Property Tax Relief Program

STEELTON, PA — Department of Aging Secretary Robert Torres and Department of Human Services Acting Secretary Meg Snead were joined by Rep. Patty Kim and community leaders today to echo Governor Tom Wolf's call for the Pennsylvania General Assembly to immediately use a portion of the \$1.7 billion in unspent American Rescue Plan Act dollars to help older adults and individuals with disabilities through property tax and rent rebates to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic.

In February, Gov. Wolf [proposed his \\$1.7 billion action plan](#), which includes a proposal to direct \$204 million to provide property tax relief to Pennsylvanians by investing in the existing [Property Tax Rent Rebate program](#). This investment would be a one-time bonus rebate to current program users, doubling existing rebates with an estimated 466,000 Pennsylvanians receiving an additional average rebate of \$475. While Democratic leaders in the Senate and House have introduced legislation, [Senate Bill 1187](#) and [House Bill 2560](#), to support Gov. Wolf's plan to invest in the existing program, the General Assembly has been slow to act.

"Older Pennsylvanians overwhelmingly want to age in their homes and communities for as long as they are able. While the Department of Aging provides services and supports to help them achieve this goal, programs like the Department of Revenue's Property Tax/Rent Rebate offers seniors an additional benefit," said Secretary Torres. "Many older adults live on fixed incomes and when it comes to their finances, paying their rent or mortgage is a top priority. Governor Wolf's proposed one time increase in the rebate amount will help seniors to meet some of their needs during these difficult times."

Sec. Torres noted that in Dauphin County, the Property Tax/Rent Rebate program benefitted 8,716 Pennsylvanians who received more than \$4 million, according to the most recent available data from the Pennsylvania Department of Revenue. Almost 60% of these recipients were age 65 and older. Almost 39% were individuals with disabilities.

"Our seniors are the foundation of our communities," said Rep. Kim. "Seniors navigate their everyday lives on a fixed income, trying to make the best of a post-pandemic world despite rising costs for necessities. This is the reason I'm advocating for the General Assembly to act to make sure federal dollars from the American Rescue Plan can be used for this one-time bonus rebate to help seniors, people with disabilities, widows and widowers."

Secretary Torres, joined by George Hartwick, Dauphin County Commissioner; Bob Burns, Dauphin County Area Agency on Aging Director; and Leah Eppinger, executive director for the

Housing Authority of the County of Dauphin, called for immediate action by the General Assembly to get money out to Pennsylvanians who are hurting right now.

“Our seniors and people with disabilities in Pennsylvania deserve the opportunity to live independently and sustain their housing in their communities of choice in the face of rising costs. It is our responsibility to support and build on the successes of programs like the Property Tax/Rent Rebate that make community living possible and sustainable for our neighbors with fixed and moderate incomes,” said DHS Acting Secretary Meg Snead. “Expanding Pennsylvania’s investment in the Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program will make a substantial impact in quality of life and dignity for seniors and people with disabilities and provides the breathing room in their budgets to help them live and thrive in our communities across Pennsylvania.”

“Everyone is paying more for nearly everything today – from prescription drugs to gas to housing but, the problem of inflation is hardest for those on fixed incomes,” said AARP Pennsylvania State Director Bill Johnston-Walsh. “The very purpose of the American Rescue Plan Act is to provide flexible, emergency funding for state and local governments to effectively respond to the negative economic impacts created by pandemic. AARP Pennsylvania is pleased to support this critical investment of American Rescue Plan Act dollars to support Property Tax Rent Rebate Program beneficiaries.”

“The governor’s proposal is a simple plan to execute. Claimants won’t have to take any additional action to receive their one-time bonus rebates,” said Revenue Secretary Dan Hassell, who heads the agency that administers the Property Tax/Rent Rebate program. “Claimants should fill out their rebate applications as they normally do, and we will automatically calculate and distribute the additional rebates to them. If anyone needs help with their rebate application, filing assistance is available at the Department of Revenue’s district offices, local Area Agencies on Aging, senior centers and state legislators’ offices.”

Since its inception in 1971, the Property Tax/Rent Rebate program has delivered more than \$7.1 billion to older adults and individuals with disabilities.

Editor’s Note: Find photos, video, and audio for your stories at pacast.com.

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