



**For Immediate Release**

January 31, 2023

## **Treasurer Stacy Garrity and Center for Rural Pennsylvania Announce Findings of PA 529 Report**

*The report focused on differences between rural and urban PA 529 account owners*

**Harrisburg, PA** — Pennsylvania Treasurer Stacy Garrity, Center for Rural Pennsylvania Board Chairman Sen. Gene Yaw (R-23), Center for Rural Pennsylvania Vice Chairman Rep. Eddie Day Pashinski (D-121), and Center for Rural Pennsylvania Executive Director Dr. Kyle C. Kopko today announced the findings of a study analyzing the differences in how residents of rural counties use and benefit from the [PA 529 College & Career Savings Program](#) compared to residents of urban counties.

The analysis, performed by the Center for Rural Pennsylvania at the request of the Pennsylvania Treasury Department, concluded that urban county beneficiaries of PA 529 accounts have more savings for postsecondary education than rural account beneficiaries even after taking into account various statistical factors. Treasurer Garrity said the report shows the importance of emphasizing outreach to rural counties across Pennsylvania, which she has focused on since taking office.

“Every Pennsylvanian deserves access to quality postsecondary education opportunities – whether that means a four-year university, community college, technical school or an apprenticeship,” Treasurer Garrity said. “This report shows that we’re doing the right thing by increasing our outreach to our rural counties, which are all too often forgotten in Harrisburg. As a lifelong resident of Bradford County, one of our most rural counties, I’m committed to making sure every corner of the state understands the benefits of PA 529. I’ve visited every county in Pennsylvania each of the last two years, and I always talk about the benefits of PA 529 and how saving with PA 529 can help families reach their education goals.”

Between January 2018 and March 2022, more than 60 percent of all contributions to PA 529 accounts, went to PA 529 Investment Plan (IP) accounts in the 19 counties defined as urban by the Center for Rural Pennsylvania.

“The Center for Rural Pennsylvania was pleased to partner with the Treasury Department to analyze its data and publish this [new research](#),” said Chairman Sen. Yaw. “This report will help raise awareness among rural residents about PA 529 accounts and how these accounts may be useful to them to save for future education and workforce training needs.”

“As a former teacher, I know how important a quality education is for a student’s long-term success,” said Vice Chairman Rep. Pashinski. “PA 529 savings accounts can make quality post-secondary education possible and affordable for more families.”

“The data presented in this report yield several important findings,” said Dr. Kyle C. Kopko, Center for Rural Pennsylvania Executive Director. “Chief among them is the finding that there is a gap in 529 plan contribution levels between rural and urban account holders – even after accounting for a range of statistical factors that may influence contributions.”

The report, [Differences in Rural and Urban PA 529 Education Savings Accounts, 2018-2022](#), also found a sharp increase in PA 529 contribution amounts during the third and fourth quarters of 2021. This followed action by the U.S. Department of the Treasury to offer advances on the Child Tax Credit, allowing parents making less than \$400,000 filing jointly to receive part of their CTC reimbursement as monthly checks. However, the report concluded that more evidence is needed as to whether those policy changes contributed to the increase.

To better reach rural communities across the Commonwealth, Treasury expanded its outreach team in 2022 by adding a Director of Outreach and Marketing and creating three regionally located outreach positions. The outreach team attends county fairs, senior expositions, legislative programs, and other events to connect with people directly. They also connect with community organizations and educational institutions to establish stronger partnerships.

The [Keystone Scholars](#) program has helped increase new PA 529 accounts for families in rural counties. Keystone Scholars provides \$100 investment to every baby born to or adopted by Pennsylvania families on or after January 1, 2019, using no taxpayer money. PA 529 account ownership has increased in nearly all rural counties since the program’s launch.

PA 529 accounts are designed to help Pennsylvania families steadily and strategically save for future educational expenses – including universities, community colleges, trade schools, apprenticeships, and K-12 education – with significant state and federal tax advantages.

Treasury offers two PA 529 plans; the [PA 529 Guaranteed Savings Plan \(GSP\)](#), which allows families to save at today's tuition rates to meet tomorrow's tuition costs, and the Morningstar Silver-Rated [PA 529 Investment Plan \(IP\)](#), which offers a variety of investment options.

Treasurer Garrity has made many changes to ease access to PA 529 accounts and bolster savings for families using the program. She eliminated the minimum deposit to open a PA 529 account and lowered the minimum contribution to \$1. PA 529 IP account owners have seen a state fee reduction, while PA 529 GSP account owners had asset-based fees waived for the current fiscal year and qualifying GSP accounts received a \$100 deposit last summer funded by GSP fund surplus earnings.

[The Center for Rural Pennsylvania](#) is a bipartisan, bicameral legislative agency that serves as a resource for rural policy within the Pennsylvania General Assembly. It was created by Act 16 of 1987, the Rural Pennsylvania Revitalization Act. The Center works with the legislature, educators, state and federal executive branch agencies, and national, statewide, regional, and local organizations to maximize resources and strategies that can better serve Pennsylvania's nearly 3.4 million rural residents.

For more information about PA 529 accounts, [visit pa529.com](http://visit.pa529.com).

**Media Contacts:**

Samantha Heckel, Press Secretary (Treasury), 717-418-0206 or [sheckel@patreasury.gov](mailto:sheckel@patreasury.gov)  
Christine Caldara Piatos, Communications Manager (Center for Rural Pennsylvania), 717-787-9555 or [caldarac@rural.pa.gov](mailto:caldarac@rural.pa.gov)

###

STACY GARRITY, STATE TREASURER  
[www.patreasury.gov](http://www.patreasury.gov)