



GOVERNOR JOSH SHAPIRO

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Wednesday, December 13, 2023

MEDIA CONTACT:

Governor's Press Office, ra-gvgovpress@pa.gov

Governor Shapiro Signs Major Bipartisan Legislation to Fund Student Mental Health, School Repairs, Public Defenders, and Teachers; Expands the Child Care Tax Credit for Over 200,000 Pennsylvania Families

Governor Shapiro signs into law major expansion of child and dependent care tax credit, first-ever state funding for indigent defense, \$175 million for environmental repairs, \$100 million for student mental health, and more.

Governor Shapiro worked with legislative leaders in both parties to build on his commonsense, fiscally responsible budget and get stuff done for Pennsylvanians.



Harrisburg, PA – Tonight, **Governor Josh Shapiro** signed the school and fiscal code bills into law, major bipartisan bills that build on the commonsense, bipartisan budget for fiscal year 2023-24 and further deliver on his top priorities to create a stronger economy, safer and healthier communities, and better schools. Governor Shapiro worked with legislative leaders from both parties to secure the bipartisan passage of major legislation that funds student mental health, environmental repairs in schools, 9-1-1 emergency dispatch, and a historic expansion of the Pennsylvania Child and Dependent Care Enhancement Tax Credit Program.

The bills Governor Shapiro signed into law tonight include language to drive out \$175 million for environmental repairs and upgrades in Pennsylvania schools – \$75 million more than the Governor requested in his proposed budget – \$100 million for student mental health, \$10 million for student teacher stipends, and \$7.5 million for indigent defense.

“I ran for Governor to deliver real, tangible solutions to the most pressing issues folks are facing every day, and the bipartisan bills I am signing tonight include more big wins for Pennsylvania,” said **Governor Josh Shapiro**. “I’m proud to stand here with leaders from both Chambers and both parties to celebrate the investments we’re making together in repairs to school buildings, mental health resources for students, childcare, the first-ever statewide funding for indigent defense, and more. Today, we’re showing that when we come together, we can get stuff done for the good people of Pennsylvania.”

Less than a year into office, Governor Shapiro and his Administration have accomplished a vast majority of the goals he laid out in his first [budget address](#) – including [expanding](#) the Property Tax/Rent Rebate program, [delivering](#) universal free breakfast for all K-12 students, providing mental health resources for students, [investing](#) in vo-tech and apprenticeship programs to give Pennsylvanians the freedom to chart their own course and the opportunity to succeed, allocating state funding for indigent defense, and more.

See below for an overview of the programs and investments included in school and code bills:

Fiscally Responsible, Balanced Budget

Governor Shapiro’s first budget, coupled with these remaining pieces of legislation, delivers on his key priorities while remaining fiscally responsible. The budget deposits \$898 million into the Rainy Day Fund, bringing the balance to over \$6.1 billion by the end of FY24.

All three major credit rating agencies recently affirmed the Commonwealth’s strong financial position – Fitch [upgraded](#) Pennsylvania’s credit rating to ‘AA’ from ‘AA-,’ Moody’s [reaffirmed](#) Pennsylvania’s Aa3 issuer credit rating and upgraded the Commonwealth’s rating outlook to positive from stable, and S&P Global Ratings

also [improved](#) Pennsylvania's outlook to 'positive' from stable and affirmed its A+ long-term rating.

Supporting and Investing in Pennsylvania Students & Teachers

Building on the **\$567 million increase** in basic education funding (BEF) for Pennsylvania school districts – the largest BEF increase in history – and the **\$46.5 million increase** to provide universal free breakfast to 1.7 million Pennsylvania K-12 students, the school code bills signed by the Governor today include:

- **Releasing \$261 million** to support Pennsylvania community colleges – and **\$70.5 million** for libraries.
- **Investing \$175 million** in environmental repairs and upgrades in our schools to create world-class facilities that are safe and healthy for students to learn in and teachers to work in.
- **Adding \$150 million** to the Educational Improvement Tax Credit Program & Opportunity Scholarship Tax Credit Program.
- **Investing \$100 million** for school-based mental health resources for students, fulfilling another key promise of Governor Shapiro's from the campaign trail.
- **Investing \$10 million** to provide Pennsylvania's student teachers with stipends so the Commonwealth can get more well-trained teachers into our classrooms.

Ensuring Pennsylvanians Are Safe and Feel Safe in Their Communities

The Shapiro Administration is working to build safer communities by supporting the work of law enforcement and first responders, investing in our families and communities, promoting anti-violence initiatives, and pursuing smart reforms to keep people safe. The fiscal code bills signed by the Governor build on that work, including:

- **\$7.5 million** to fund Indigent Defense for the first time in Pennsylvania history. As a result of this bill, Pennsylvania will no longer be one of only two states in the country that does not allocate state funding for indigent defense.
- **Increasing funding for four new Pennsylvania State Police trooper cadet classes** to help hire and train nearly 400 new troopers, helping to fill staffing gaps for critical public safety positions for those on the front lines of keeping our communities safe and healthy.
- **Extending the 911 surcharge and increasing the amount per line to \$1.95**, increasing critical emergency funding for counties.

Historic Expansion to Pennsylvania Child and Dependent Care Enhancement Tax Credit

Governor Shapiro knows that a lack of affordable childcare can hold back our children, parents, and economy. The legislation he signed tonight includes a major expansion to the Pennsylvania Child and Dependent Care Enhancement Tax Credit, helping to ease child and dependent care costs for working Pennsylvania families.

Emergency Funding for Pennsylvania Hospitals

- Governor Shapiro believes every Pennsylvanian deserves access to affordable health care and the legislation he signed tonight includes \$50 million for Hospital and Healthsystem Emergency Relief to support the vital work of hospitals in keeping Pennsylvania communities safe.

For more information on the investments made in the commonsense, bipartisan 2023-24 budget, visit shapirobudget.pa.gov.

#