

Rep. Chris

Sainato

Budget Report



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Dear Neighbor,

We started budget negotiations this year with a healthy surplus but the same responsibility to spend those dollars wisely – in ways that will benefit working families, seniors and small businesses while also protecting taxpayers and ensuring there are sufficient reserves for a rainy day.

The \$45.2 billion spending plan we passed does those things. It holds the line on new taxes while delivering a substantial investment in our public schools to level the playing field for students and ease the property tax burden on residents.

The new budget also puts remaining federal rescue dollars to work in ways that will improve quality of life for families struggling with the higher cost of living.

Some highlights of the plan include:

- Significant increases in public school funding that include Level Up funding for a number of schools in our district.

- Use of federal stimulus dollars to expand affordable housing, help residents with home repairs, stabilize the child care industry and provide a supplemental rebate under the Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program.
- New funding to improve care for Pennsylvanians in the state's nursing homes, veterans homes and other long-term care facilities.
- A tax cut to help our small businesses rebuild and thrive.

You can read about these and other features of the new budget in the pages that follow!

Also, please remember that I'm working for you at home as well as in Harrisburg. If you need help with any state-related matter, don't hesitate to stop by my office at the Z-Penn Building, located at 20 S. Mercer St. in New Castle, or call (724) 656-1112 to schedule an appointment.



Investing in our public schools

This year's budget contains historic increases for education, including an additional \$525 million increase in basic education funding and another \$100 million for special education funding. In addition, the budget provides \$225 million in Level Up funding to school districts such as New Castle, which have faced decades of underfunding.

Overall, Lawrence County schools will see an additional \$6.4 million in funding compared to last year's budget.

It's an investment that is long overdue. Pennsylvania ranks 44th in the nation in state funding for public schools, with just 38% of education costs covered by the state. The current system, which relies on local property taxes to make up for funding shortfalls, burdens taxpayers and fails our kids, whose education shouldn't depend on their ZIP code.

The new budget – which will deliver more than \$4 million in additional funding to New Castle schools – may not solve decades of underfunding, but it's a step in the right direction. Here's a look at across-the-board increases to our school districts:

- Laurel School District: \$135,200 (1.8% increase) for basic education and \$25,200 (3% increase) for special education.
- Mohawk Area School District: \$459,200 (4.5% increase) for basic education and \$66,300 (5.3% increase) for special education.
- Neshannock Township School District: \$165,200 (4.9% increase) for basic education and \$44,800 (6.3% increase) for special education.
- New Castle Area School District: \$4 million (15.3% increase) for basic education and \$234,400 (9.3% increase) for special education funding.

- Shenango Area School District: \$125,200 (1.7% increase) for basic education and \$56,200 (6.6% increase) for special education.
- Union Area School District: \$258,200 (5.2% increase) for basic education funding and \$40,400 (7.2% increase) for special education.
- Wilmington Area School District: \$189,500 (3.2% increase) for basic education funding and \$45,200 (4.1% increase) for special education.

In addition to the basic and special education funding, each school district will receive \$100,000 plus \$15 for each student from a \$100 million fund for school safety and mental health.

Beyond public schools, the budget includes a \$79 million increase for early education through the Pre-K Counts and Head Start programs, and a \$220 million increase for public higher education.

Around the district

Meeting with folks around the district never fails to inspire me. Here's a look at some wonderful visits I had with our community-minded residents.



Cray Youth and Family Services' bowl-a-thon is always a fun way to support the group's wonderful mentoring program!



Love for our community shines through whenever I visit with members of our local chapter of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees.



Events like the Mohawk Teachers Holiday Toy Drive always remind me of how lucky Lawrence County is to have such dedicated teachers.



The weather cooperated for the Juneteenth celebration at Cascade Park, giving us a beautiful day for a terrific event.



It was inspiring to spend time with the civic-minded members of Scout Troop 744.



The Out of the Darkness Suicide Prevention Walk at New Castle Riverwalk united many in our community behind an important cause.



It was heartwarming to see area students volunteer their time on local projects during the United Way Day of Caring.

Expanding this year's Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program

As the cost of living continues to rise, we need solutions to help seniors and other residents living on a fixed income manage those costs and retain their quality of life. That's why I worked to help secure budget funding for an additional rebate under the Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program.

Since it began in 1971, the program has been instrumental in helping low-income seniors and disabled residents remain in their homes.

The new state spending plan taps \$140 million in remaining federal stimulus money to provide program recipients with a one-time, supplemental payment equaling 70% of their regular rebate for 2021. Additional applications are not required for the supplement rebates, which will be distributed once they become available.



Stabilizing the child care industry

Working parents and caregivers rely on safe, affordable child care, but the industry was hit hard by the pandemic, which caused costs to rise and enrollments to plummet.

The new state budget will help stabilize this critical industry by tapping \$90 million in federal stimulus dollars to fund a child care staff-retention grant program. The program will help providers retain staff by providing one-time payments to supplement existing wages.

In addition to the grant program, the budget establishes a new child care tax credit to help working families with kids enrolled in child care.

Fighting crime and strengthening survivors

The new budget is tough on crime, tapping \$260 million in federal rescue dollars for public safety. That funding includes \$135 million for law enforcement support grants, \$75 million for violence intervention and prevention programs, and \$50 million for gun violence investigation and prosecution programs.

Additional budget funding will bolster programs to reduce community violence, improve investigation and prosecution of child abuse, create a statewide child predator unit, improve parole services, and fund a diversion program for first-time, nonviolent offenders.



Improving care for nursing home residents

Staff-to-patient ratios directly affect quality of care for patients in nursing homes and other long-term facilities. But the facilities that care for at least 80,000 of Pennsylvania's most vulnerable residents were already struggling with insufficient staffing and increasing care costs before the pandemic hit, exacerbating those problems.

To address these issues, the new state budget will fund a 17.5% increase in Medicaid reimbursement rates and allocate more than \$130 million in federal pandemic relief to nursing homes and long-term care facilities. The rate reimbursement increase and direct funding – together estimated at more than \$500 million – will allow facilities to hire and train sufficient staff to deliver the quality of care residents deserve.

Helping with housing

The new state budget taps stimulus dollars to help residents with housing issues. The budget will use \$125 million of that federal funding to create a future program that will help homeowners and landlords with repairs. Once the program is up and running, it will be available to homeowners with an income up to 80% of the area median.

Another \$100 million in federal stimulus money will help expand affordable housing by establishing a grant program for developers and nonprofits constructing or rehabilitating affordable housing for low-income tenants.

Cutting the corporate tax rate

Our community businesses are the lifeblood of our economy, but despite the talent and perseverance of local entrepreneurs, nearly all small businesses suffered because of the pandemic.

To help them continue rebuilding and make it easier for them to thrive, we worked to ensure that the 2022-23 budget provides for a corporate tax cut. Under the plan, Pennsylvania's corporate net income tax rate will drop incrementally from 9.99% to 4.99% over the next nine years.

Saving for a Rainy Day

Developing a responsible spending plan also means saving for the future. To ensure Pennsylvania is equipped to deal with any future challenges that may arise, I supported a deposit of \$2.1 billion into the state's Rainy Day Fund, which will increase the fund's reserve balance to nearly \$5 billion.



STATE REP. CHRIS SAINATO

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Giving back to those who served

As Democratic chairman of the House Veterans Affairs and Emergency Preparedness Committee, I work to ensure important bills benefiting veterans make it to the governor’s desk. But it’s also important to make sure there is funding in place to support new and existing programs and services.

The budget we passed provides double-digit-percentage increases for veterans’ outreach services and programs, including Vet Connect and suicide prevention services, as well as healthy increases to augment staff and services at Pennsylvania’s six veterans’ homes.

The budget also supports emergency preparedness legislation that originated in my committee, including my first-responder loan forgiveness program and similar bills designed to help build back the dwindling ranks of first responders.



It was a pleasure spending time with the Pulaski Fire Department at their Memorial Weekend Parade



Sign up for email updates!

Visit my webpage at www.RepSainato.com to sign up for my email updates about programs, services, events and news involving our district!

How my office can help

My office can help with a wide range of state-related questions or services, including:

- Obtaining and completing all state forms, including PACE (senior prescription help), home heating/ water assistance, Property Tax/ Rent Rebate, PHEAA (higher education assistance), and others.
- Car registrations; special tags, titles and license applications; disability placards; other problems or questions involving PennDOT.
- Birth and death certificate applications.
- Problems or questions regarding Department of Human Services programs, including SNAP/EBT and other assistance.
- Unemployment compensation.
- Questions or problems regarding utilities and other consumer services.
- Any problem or question involving state government!

Need to report a road problem?

You can report potholes and other issues involving state road conditions by calling 1-800-FIX-ROAD or visiting www.penndot.gov and clicking on “Submit a Roadway Concern.”

