

This document tracks the status of our COVID-19 policy agenda for Pennsylvania and will be regularly updated. Things are moving fast in response to the pandemic, so if you notice anything that needs updated, please send our Senior Policy Analyst, Diana Polson, an email with details: polson@pennbpc.org

A note on the color code - each issue area has a different color. Cells to turn a darker color once policy/initiative has been passed/achieved.

Pennsylvania's Policy Plan and Status for COVID-19 - PBPC

Issue Area	Policy Goal	How to Achieve - executive order, legislation, other?	Legislators involved	Status	Related Federal Action?	Notes/Resources
Economic Relief - Housing	<p>NO EVICTIONS OR FORECLOSURES: A moratorium should be placed on evictions and foreclosure during the length of the emergency.</p>	legislation		DONE - State Supreme Court ruled Wed. March 18 that no landlord or bank can evict a tenant bc of a failure to pay rent or mortgage payments. Extended until April 30.	trillion CARES Act halts certain evictions for 120 days. It applies to public housing as well unites funded by Section 8 vouchers or owned by landlords with federally backed loans. That is about 45% of renters nationwide. The act also includes money for retail assistance,	<p>https://www.pennlive.com/news/2020/04/pennsylvania-as-highest-court-extends-eviction-moratorium-as-coronavirus-shutdowns-lead-to-record-unemployment.html; https://triblive.com/news/pennsylvania/citing-covid-19-pennsylvania-senate-democrats-seek-to-halt-evictions-and-foreclosures/</p>

Economic Relief - Housing	Freeze rent and mortgage payments.	legislation	Reps Elizabeth Fiedler (D - Philly), Sara Innamorato (D - Alleghency), Danielle Friel Otten (D - Chester)	Reps. Fiedler, Innamorato, Friel Otten introducing legislation to freeze rent and mortgage payments.		https://www.wtae.com/article/pennsylvania-legislators-preparing-rent-mortgage-freeze-bill/32013431; https://www.legis.state.pa.us/cfdocs/Legis/CSM/showMemoPublic.cfm?chamber=H&SPick=20190&cosponId=31505
Economic Relief - Utilities	NO UTILITY SHUTOFFS: No utilities should be cut off during thenational public health emergency	Public Utility Commission		DONE - The PA PUC issued an emergency order on 3/13/20 that establishes a moratorium on public utility service terminations.		http://www.puc.pa.gov/general/pdf/Emergency_Order_M-2020-3019244_031320.pdf
Economic Relief	NO CREDIT DEFAULTS, SCHOOL LOAN PAYMENTS OR OTHER LIENS: for workers who may be laid off or have reduced hours for the duration of the national public health emergency.					

Economic Relief - Child Care	<p>FUNDING TO CHILD CARE CENTERS: According to Start Strong PA and Pre-K for PA campaigns, PA could see permanent closures of nearly 1/3 of its childcare centers from an extended economic shutdown. Legislation would: 1) provide \$100 million to childcare centers to cover admin expenses, including payroll and fill the loss of tuition payments from families; 2) Provide \$17 million for PreK and Head Start to cover admin expenses,</p>	legislation	Senator Judith Schwank and Sen. Lindsey Williams	Legislation to be introduced by Senator Schwank and Sen. Williams		
Economic Relief - General Assistance	<p>RESTORE GENERAL ASSISTANCE: General Assistance was eliminated last year and should be restored to help the most vulnerable Pennsylvanians</p>	legislation				

Economic Relief - Grab and go meals	<p>SCHOOLS TO PROVIDE GRAB AND GO MEALS FOR KIDS: Have schools provide grab and go meals for local families.</p>			PA DOE received approval from the federal government to allow K-12 schools in PA closed due to COVID-19 to serve meals offsite to students.		This link shows a map of where: https://www.education.pa.gov/Schools/safeschools/emergencyplanning/COVID-19/Meals4Kids/Pages/default.aspx
Economic Relief - Human Services Programs	<p>REQUIREMENTS OF IN-PERSON INTERACTIONS: at all county assistance offices (CAOs) and encourage all clients to take advantage of telephone and internet-based alternatives. Encourage the use of the MyCompassPA mobile app, fax, or mail to submit verification. Reduce, eliminate, and delay verification requirements so that people can secure benefits quickly. Suspend appeal deadlines and grant</p>					
Economic Relief - LIHEAP	<p>EXTEND LIHEAP: Extend the LIHEAP season until all LIHEAP funds are expended.</p>					

<p>Economic Relief - Loans to small businesses</p>	<p>LOANS FOR SMALL BUSINESSES: The state should quickly establish a program to loan funds at low interest rates to small businesses threatened by the pandemic to enable them to ride out the crisis.</p>			<p>announced on 3/19/20 that the U.S. Small Business Administration has made available low interest loans for small businesses and eligible non-profits in all 67 counties in Pennsylvania . “SBA’s Economic Injury Disaster Loans offer up to \$2 million in assistance and can provide vital economic</p>	<p>https://www.governor.pa.gov/newsroom/gov-wolf-economic-injury-disaster-loans-available-to-small-businesses-and-non-profits-facing-losses-related-to-covid-19/</p>
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<p>Economic Relief - Paid Family and Medical Leave</p>	<p>MEDICAL LEAVE INSURANCE: Paid family and medical leave for those who must leave their jobs to take care of family members who are ill. The legislature is now considering bipartisan legislation (The Family Care Act - Sen. Laughlin) to establish a paid family and medical leave program, for which we have advocated, paid for by a small tax on employees. However, we need such a program now, before those taxes have been paid into the fund set up for this</p>	<p>Legislation</p>	<p>Sen. Farnese (addresses some leave issues)</p>	<p>seeking to expand FMLA to include: 1) emergency paid sick leave for all employees not covered by the federal bill (Families First). 2) extend paid sick leave for an additional 4 days to cover 2 week quarantine. 3) paid leave will be extended to those laid off or who's workplaces have closed.4)</p>	<p>Expanded family and medical leave program part of Families First Coronavirus Aid Package (signed March 18 into law).</p>	<p>https://www.legis.state.pa.us/cfdocs/billinfo/billinfo.cfm?sYear=2019&body=S&type=B&bn=0580</p>
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<p>Economic Relief - Paid Sick Days</p>	<p>DAYS: . The state should act in this area if, as seems likely, the federal government does not go far enough. Paid sick day proposals provide benefits to workers who earn them over time. However, the immediate establishment of paid sick days for all working people is a moral necessity. It would be reasonable for the state to provide small businesses with some compensation to cover the costs of sick days in the first six months of the program.</p>		<p>Sen. Farnese (addresses some leave issues)</p>	<p>seeking to expand FMLA to include: 1) emergency paid sick leave for all employees not covered by the federal bill (Families First). 2) extend paid sick leave for an additional 4 days to cover 2 week quarantine. 3) paid leave will be extended to those laid off or who's workplaces have closed.4)</p>	<p>paid sick leave part of Families First Coronavirus Aid Package (signed March 18 into law). R. 6201 Families First Coronavirus Response Act creates an emergency paid benefit leave program for workers who are diagnosed with COVID-19, are in quarantine,</p>	<p>https://pulse.ncpolicywatch.org/2020/03/15/state-and-federal-policy-responses-to-the-covid-19-virus/; https://www.latimes.com/business/story/2020-03-24/la-fi-coronavirus-paid-sick-leave-qualify</p>
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<p>Economic Relief - Public sector workers</p>	<p>LAY OFF EMPLOYEES DURING THE CRISIS: The state should not lay off employees during this crisis and should prohibit school districts and contractors that use state funds to carry out their work from doing so as well. Continuation of pay and benefits for hourly K-12 School District employees, along with salaried employees, during any school shutdowns. Continuation of pay for contracted workers, such as those employed by food service</p>			<p>State has already laid off workers. See link to right.</p>	<p>nquirer.com/health/coronavirus/spl/pennsylvania-pa-coronavirus-state-employees-paycheck-freeze-layoffs-tom-wolf-20200403.html?utm_source=First+Read+Newsletters&utm_campaign=1ed24f6945-5-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2020_04_06_01_06&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_252d27c7d1-1ed24f6945-34759272&mc_cid=1ed24f</p>
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Economic Relief - SNAP	LIMIT TERMINATIONS OF SNAP: Limit termination of SNAP benefits by extending SNAP certification periods.				Families First Coronavirus Response Act includes a nationwide, temporary suspension of SNAP's 3 month time limit on benefits for adults under age 50 without children in their home (takes effect April 1). State can also halt benefit sanctions for failure to meet work requiremen	https://www.cbpp.org/research/food-assistance/usda-states-must-act-swiftly-to-deliver-food-assistance-allowed-by-families
Economic Relief - SNAP	ENSURE SNAP BENEFITS INCREASE WITH DECLINING INCOMES: Ensure SNAP benefits are promptly increased when income declines, limiting verification requirements					
Economic Relief - SNAP	EXPEDITE SNAP APPLICATIONS: Make sure SNAP applications are expedited.			DONE. Emergency SNAP applications can be expedited and issued in 5 days	According to this site: https://www.pa.gov/guides/responding-to-covid-19/	

Economic Relief - SNAP	<p>EMERGENCY SNAP ASSISTANCE: provide emergency SNAP assistance to households with children who are losing free or reduced meals because their schools are closed</p>				<p>The Families First Coronavirus Response Act allows states to provide SNAP benefits to households with children who attend a school that's closed and who would otherwise receive free or reduced price meals.</p>	<p>https://www.cbpp.org/blog/families-first-will-strengthen-states-ability-to-address-rising-food-needs</p>
Economic Relief - SNAP	<p>INCREASE SNAP BENEFITS: Increase SNAP benefits wherever possible</p>				<p>Federal CARES Act does NOT include a SNAP benefit increase. Current SNAP benefits amount to only about \$1.40 per person per meal. Don't think the Families First Coronavirus Response Act increases SNAP benefits.</p>	<p>Probably unable to increase SNAP benefits at state level?</p>

Economic Relief - State EITC	PASS A STATE EITC: A State EITC would get more money in the hands of working families (who worked in 2019).					
Economic Relief - TANF	LIMIT TERMINATION AND REDUCTIONS OF TANF BENEFITS					https://cbpp.my.salesforce.com/sfc/p/
Economic Relief - TANF	EASE REQUIREMENTS FOR TANF: Currently you have to have essentially no income and less than \$1000 in assets to qualify for TANF.	Legislation could change these rules.				https://cbpp.my.salesforce.com/sfc/p/
Economic Relief - TANF	RAISE TANF BENEFITS: TANF benefits haven't been raised since 1990 and remain extremely low. One option: Washington State is giving one-time boosts of money - like \$500 - to everyone on TANF.	Legislation needed				https://cbpp.my.salesforce.com/sfc/p/

Economic Relief - TANF	<p>PUBLICIZE THE AVAILABILITY OF TANF DIVERSION PROGRAM: to assist families of those unable to work as a result of the pandemic, whether healthy or not, and who are not eligible for unemployment compensation or the deferral paid sick leave provision.</p>					https://cbpp.my.salesforce.com/sfc/p/
Economic Relief - TANF	<p>REQUIRE MINIMUM DOCUMENTATION FOR TANF AND ISSUE 3 MONTHS OF TANF BENEFITS: TANF benefits should go to families whose return to work is indefinite</p>					https://cbpp.my.salesforce.com/sfc/p/
Economic Relief - Unemployment Insurance	<p>WAIVE DELAY FOR UI: Waive the week-long delay before workers can receive their first unemployment insurance payment.</p>			DONE		

Economic Relief - Unemployment Insurance	WAIVE WORK SEARCH REQUIREMENTS FOR UI: Waive work-search requirements, including registering online for Career Link, performing weekly searches and attending Re-Employment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) classes.			DONE		
Economic Relief - Unemployment Insurance	CONDUCT UI HEARINGS BY PHONE: Conduct unemployment compensation referee hearings by telephone.	Unemployment Compensation Board of Review		DONE		
Economic Relief - Unemployment Insurance	UI TO THOSE WHO QUIT DUE TO UNSAFE WORK CONDITIONS: Ensure UI provides coverage for workers who have quit jobs due to unsafe working conditions and those who have to leave to take care of sick family members			ALREADY IN PA LAW		

Economic Relief - Unemployment Insurance	INCREASE UI BENEFITS: Increase amount of benefits				Federal CARES Act increases benefits to \$600 per week through July 31 for recipients of PUA or regular UI.	
Economic Relief - Unemployment Insurance	INCREASE STAFFING FOR UI: Provide emergency funding to the Department to increase staffing and cover overtime for those who provide unemployment insurance services					

Economic Relief - Unemployment Insurance	<p>EXPAND ELIGIBILITY FOR UI: Ensure that workers who would be able and available for work, if not for the health crisis and state of emergency it has created, are not disqualified from receiving unemployment insurance.</p>				<p>CARES Act - creates a Pandemic Unemployment Assistance program that includes workers who lack an extensive enough work history, those looking for PT work, those that have exhausted their regular UI benefits. Workers can access 39 weeks of PUA</p>	<p>https://www.cbpp.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/3-27-20econ.pdf-on federal CARES Act;</p>
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Economic Relief - Unemployment Insurance	<p>ENSURE SELF-EMPLOYED, GIG WORKERS CAN ACCESS UI: Do not disqualify workers for "self-employment" who are doing contract, "gig," or other shortterm work from receiving unemployment insurance because they cannot perform their normal work</p>				<p>Looks like under the Federal CARES Act, independent contractors are now eligible for UI (Pandemic Unemployment Assistance - PUA)</p>	<p>pp.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/3-27-20econ.pdf - on federal CARES act; https://www.nelap.org/publication/unemployment-insurance-protections-response-covid-19-state-developments/ - Kentucky (through legislative action) and New Hampshire (through executive order) expanded their state UI programs to cover workers who are not traditionally</p>
Economic Relief - Unemployment Insurance	<p>EXPAND FINANCIAL ELIGIBILITY FOR UI: Legislative changes that will expand financial eligibility for low-wage workers who will be hit hardest by this crisis.</p>					

Economic Relief - Unemployment Insurance	<p>EXPAND WORK SHARING: Mitigate the impact of the recession on families and businesses by expanding "work sharing." Work sharing allows employees who have their hours cut to receive partial unemployment benefits. Employers benefit because they retain employees with specialized skills/</p>				Federal CARES Act provides states with funding for short-term compensation (work-sharing) programs	
Economic Relief - Unemployment Insurance	<p>EXPAND UI BEYOND 26 WEEKS: Expand UI availability beyond the 26 weeks to 52 weeks.</p>				Under the federal CARES Act, benefits will be available for an additional 13 weeks for those receiving regular UI (beyond the normal 26). Workers who exhaust those benefits can then access PUA benefits as long as the program is in place.	<p>https://www.cbpp.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/3-27-20econ.pdf</p>

Economic Relief - Unemployment Insurance	<p>TIPPED WORKERS: Assessment of unemployment compensation for tipped workers based on the Bureau of Labor Statistics' calculation of \$11.85 as their hourly rate.</p>				
Economic Relief - Unemployment Insurance	<p>ENSURE EMPLOYERS ARE NOT BEING PENALIZED WITH HIGHER UI TAX RATES BECAUSE OF PANDEMIC-RELATED LAYOFFS: make sure benefits issued will not be "charged" to the employer's "experience rating." This is important to ensure employers do not try and discourage employees from filing claims.</p>				<p>At least 16 states have done this: https://www.nelp.org/publication/unemployment-insurance-protections-response-covid-19-state-developments/</p>
Economic Relief - Unemployment Insurance	<p>Develop well-designed outreach materials, flyers, and FAQs communicating, in clear and simple terms, workers' rights to access UI and other benefits in response to COVID-19.</p>				<p>Several states have done this including California, Washington and New Jersey: https://www.nelp.org/publication/unemployment-insurance-protections-response-covid-19-state-developments/</p>

Health Care	<p>COVER TESTING AND TREATMENT: Insurance Commissioner to require all insurance policies cover testing for and treatment of COVID-19, including emergency room visits. These same services should be provided to immigrants, regardless of status, and the state should take steps to ensure that undocumented immigrants are not put at risk when they seek testing or health care.</p>	Insurance commissioner				
Health Care	<p>NO LOSS OF PUBLIC BENEFITS: No one should lose public health benefits or long-term services and supports due to administrative difficulties and delays.</p>					

Health Care	<p>ESTABLISH MEDICAID EXPRESS LANE: Benefits should flow quickly to those who need them and an "express lane" created for applications for Medicaid/Medical Assistance, specially for those with issues related to COVID-19 with verification of eligibility should be minimized and delayed. Terminations for Medicaid/Medical Assistance should be suspended.</p>				<p>https://docs.google.com/document/d/1EHSXer5GeBuccd6yW1vP8sAOoxQt9aEPgCCXZZHS15g/edit - States should take advantage of the overlapping eligibility for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Medicaid by using SNAP income data in determining and renewing Medicaid eligibility. States can also implement express lane eligibility (ELE) for children,</p>
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Health Care	<p>SMOOTH TRANSITIONS BTW MEDICAID AND MARKETPLACE: The health care marketplace should enable smooth transitions between marketplace policies and Medicaid / Medical Assistance for those who suffer loss of income. Those who lose employer-based insurance should be able to quickly secure marketplace insurance, and the availability of those policies should be widely advertised.</p>					
Health Care	<p>EXPANSION OF MEDICAID: Expand to all Pennsylvanians without insurance until the end of 2020.</p>					
Health Care	<p>WAIVE COST SHARING: Waive all cost sharing for emergency room, urgent care and office visits associated with screening and testing.</p>					

Health Care	<p>EMERGENCY STANDARDS AND ACCOUNTABILITY: for health care facilities to implement containment control plans.</p>		Sen. Maria Collett and Sen. Lindsey Williams	Collett and Sen. Lindsey Williams to introduce Front-line Worker Protections including 1) provide emergency funding for safety equipment, including PPE such as N95 masks, and mental health supports for healthcare workers and other public sector workers classified as essential, 2) create clear		<p>https://www.senatorlindseywilliams.com/senators-maria-collett-and-lindsey-m-williams-announce-legislation-to-protect-front-line-workers-during-covid-19-outbreak/?fbclid=IwAR0RCDCipp5IWrk8cMYVjed-G4gUcSqiLET9OHqIq5xZ2DW_wAdE0gDTzU</p>
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Infrastructure	<p>INVESTMENT IN PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE: Pennsylvania has a serious public infrastructure investment deficit. This moment, when interest rates are near or at zero and construction costs will decline, is the ideal time for the state to expand its capital budget to invest more in roads, bridges, public transit, and broadband access. Doing so would address our infrastructure deficit, ensure that building trades workers remain employed during the crisis, generate</p>					<p>Green stimulus: https://medium.com/@green_stimulus_now/a-green-stimulus-to-rebuild-our-economy-1e7030a1d9ee</p>
Political Equality and Democracy	<p>MAIL BALLOTS: The state should mail all ballots for both the primary election and the general election to registered voters with paid postage.</p>					
Political Equality and Democracy	<p>POSTPONE PRIMARY ELECTION: Until June 2</p>			Done		

Political Equality and Democracy	<p>PASS RESOLUTION PROTECTING AAPI: Legislators must pass to protect the Asian-American community from racist and xenophobic harassment and attacks. We need to expand the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission to investigate discrimination against Pennsylvania's Asian and Pacific Islander communities.</p>					
Political Equality and Democracy	<p>POSTPONE ELECTIONS: Unless and until provisions are made to allow everyone to vote by mail, elections other than the General Election in November, including special election, should be put off until it is not dangerous for people to congregate in public.</p>					
Revenue	<p>PASS THE FAIR SHARE TAX:</p>	Legislation				

Worker Protection	<p>PROTECTIONS FROM DISCIPLINARY ACTION: Protect workers who use sick time or leave due to COVID-19 from disciplinary action from employers. Current PA law does not address whether an employer can fire an employee while under quarantine or in isolation. Workers should not be fired as a result of this.</p>	legislation	Senator Steven J. Santarsiero	To be introduced (or already?)	
Worker Protection	<p>SAFETY EQUIPMENT: Emergency funding for safety equipment and mental health supports for front-line healthcare workers, direct support professionals and first responders</p>		Sen. Maria Collett and Sen. Lindsey Williams	Collett and Sen. Lindsey Williams to introduce Front-line Worker Protections including 1) provide emergency funding for safety equipment, including PPE such as N95 masks, and mental health supports for healthcare workers and other public sector workers classified as essential, 2) create clear	<p>https://www.senatorlindseywilliams.com/senators-maria-collett-and-lindsey-m-williams-announce-legislation-to-protect-front-line-workers-during-covid-19-outbreak/?fbclid=IwAR0RCDCipp5IWrk8cMYVjed-G4gUcSqiLET90Hqlq5xZ2DW_wAdE0gDTzU</p>

Worker Protection	<p>REGULAR CLEANING OF WORKSPACES: Require the regular cleaning and sanitation of workspaces that remain open to workers and/or the public in a manner that meets or exceeds federal and state standards for preveneting COVID-19.</p>		<p>Health Secretary Levine signed an order; This is also part of proposed legislation put out by Sen. Maria Collett and Sen. Lindsey Williams</p>	<p>Levine signed an order requiring businesses with at least 50,000 square feet used for commercial, industrial or other enterprises, like warehousing, manufacturin g, commercial offices, airports, grocery stores, etc. that are still operating to clean high touch areas in a way that complies with</p>	<p>governor.pa.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/20200405-SOH-Building-Safety-Measures.pdf; https://www.pennlive.com/news/2020/04/state-order-outlines-cleaning-disinfecting-guidelines-for-life-sustaining-businesses-still-open-during-coronavirus.html?utm_source=First+Read+Newsletters&utm_campaign=1ed24f6945-</p>
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Worker Protection	<p>RETURN TO WORK PROTECTIONS: Return to work protections for those who utilize unemployment compensation or leave work due to childcare, school or other temporary closures.</p>		Sen. Farnese	<p>seeking to expand FMLA to include: 1) emergency paid sick leave for all employees not covered by the federal bill (Families First). 2) extend paid sick leave for an additional 4 days to cover 2 week quarantine. 3) paid leave will be extended to those laid off or who's workplaces have closed.4)</p>		
Worker Protection	<p>TELECOMMUNICATIONS: Establish free and reliable access to telecommunication s tools so that workers can work remotely by ensuring internet providers waive fees for the duration of the crisis and cell phone companies provide free mobile hotspots through every cell phone.</p>					

Worker Protection	<p>ENSURE ALL LIFE SUSTAINING WORKERS HAVE ACCESS TO PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT: This should include grocery store workers, delivery workers, trash and recycling collectors, all workers in health care, janitorial staff, child care workers still working, etc. All workers should be covered including low-wage workers, health workers, independent contractors, undocumented immigrants, etc.</p>		Sen. Maria Collett and Sen. Lindsey Williams	Collett and Sen. Lindsey Williams to introduce Front-line Worker Protections including 1) provide emergency funding for safety equipment, including PPE such as N95 masks, and mental health supports for healthcare workers and other public sector workers classified as essential, 2) create clear		
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<p>Worker Protection</p>	<p>CONTRACT WORKERS IN SCHOOL DISTRICTS GET PAID: employees who provide services to schools through contracts were left out. Thousands of workers across the Commonwealth are no longer getting paychecks for services school districts have budgeted for. Amend the PAndemic of 2020 section of the Piublic School Code to allow school entitites to renegotiate a contract for contract service providers during</p>	<p>Legislation to amend Public School Code</p>	<p>Sponsored by Sen. Pam Lovino</p>	<p>To be introduced.</p>		
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