



# CAPITOL UPDATE

# STATE REPRESENTATIVE MAUREEN E. MADDEN

## Representing the 115th Legislative District

Winter 2023

## Town Hall Talk

On Sept. 16, I hosted a town hall meeting at Northampton Community College – Monroe Campus. I was joined by more than 100 of you who came to share concerns and discuss recent legislative developments. My able staff and I prepared a PowerPoint slideshow to review our recent casework, grant support, and legislative initiatives.

The vast majority of attendees expressed strong concerns about the prospect of warehouse proliferation. I asked then-executive director of the Brodhead Watershed Association, Alex Jackson, to speak to how municipal leaders can be better prepared for these types of developments. Jackson explained the economic and environmental benefits of smarter planning on the part of municipalities.

Pocono Township Manager Taylor Muñoz described how his township commissioners implemented common-sense regulations to promote environmental protection and avoid warehouse proliferation. Muñoz explained that township commissioners created overlay districts for very specific parcels in the township that allow for warehouse or distribution center development.



For my part, I have co-sponsored H.B. 782, introduced by House Majority Caucus Chair Mike Schlossberg. The bill would allow municipal leaders to determine if projects are regionally significant and therefore require additional scrutiny. The legislation may require studies to demonstrate exactly how they impact surrounding neighborhoods, infrastructure improvements, open space, and much more. The results of these studies will permit municipalities to impose reasonable conditions to control the impact of large-scale development.

In addition to warehouse proliferation, I had the pleasure of speaking with attendees about other concerns, including workforce development and funding for public education. It is so vital that legislators meet face-to-face with constituents to hear their concerns and take those concerns to Harrisburg for resolution.



# Legislative Update

## My Opioid Treatment Legislation Advances to the Senate

This year, with the help of House Majority Caucus Chair Mike Schlossberg, I introduced H.B. 1515 to help county jails establish and expand medication treatments for opioid use disorder. Currently, funding exists for this program, but not for all federally approved treatments.

My legislation would allow the leftover funding for the original program to be used for any federally approved treatment. State correctional institutions already utilize the other federally approved treatments with great success. The bill passed the House of Representatives 199-4. I am grateful for the strong bipartisan support for this critical legislation.

My legislation and advocacy afforded me a unique opportunity for the upcoming year. I was honored to receive a nomination from Speaker Joanna McClinton to seek a fellowship in the National Conference of State Legislatures' Opioid Policy Program. Only a select few legislators are given the chance to apply to the program; 20-25 are selected by NCSL.

Next year, I will join legislators from across the country to discuss legislative solutions to abate and end the opioid epidemic. The program offers direct access to expert researchers, both for legislation and policy. NCSL works with legislators to develop an action plan tailored to their state. I look forward to working with NCSL and my counterparts from across the country to help bring this crisis under control.

## 911/988 Interoperability Study Proposed

Before 988 was implemented in PA, a constituent of mine, 19-year-old Christian Hall, called 911 while in the middle of a devastating mental health crisis on Dec. 30, 2020, and ultimately died at the hands of Pennsylvania State Troopers after a long, unsuccessful attempt to de-escalate the situation. Our police officers spend too large a portion of their valuable time responding to these types of situations, either transporting individuals to emergency departments or jails. It's a crisis of its own that cries out for reform.

The truth is that individuals like Christian Hall require a level of comprehensive mental health support that goes beyond the capabilities of our traditional law enforcement agencies. Our moral duty is to ensure that every Pennsylvanian in mental health distress has access to a robust crisis response system built on principles of non-violence, cultural competence, and linguistic accessibility.

That is why I am proud to introduce two pieces of legislation that would honor the memory of Christian Hall and, more importantly, help ensure that such a tragedy is never repeated.

While I await the finalization of text for the second piece of legislation,



I introduced H.R. 252, which would direct the Joint State Government Commission to establish the 911/988 Technical Advisory Board and conduct a study and issue recommendations on interoperability between and across 911 and 988. It would help develop technical and operational standards for the 988 system, including coordination with Pennsylvania's 911 system and training.

The commission would be inclusive, featuring people with technical expertise and mental health experience, residents from immigrant communities to help bridge any communication gaps, as well as representatives from the General Assembly and the Shapiro administration.

As examples, the commission would examine:

- Triage and response to warm handoffs from 911 and 988 call centers.
- Training necessary for personnel staffing 911 to assess whether coordinating with 988 is appropriate.
- Development of a protocol for responders, law enforcement, and fire and ambulance services to request assistance from each other.

## Property Tax/Rent Rebate Expansion Signed Into Law

This term, I worked with my colleagues, including prime sponsor House Finance Committee Chair Steve Samuelson, Rep. Patty Kim, Rep. Ismail Smith-Wade-El, and Rep. Carol Hill-Evans to update guidelines for the Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program.

Introduced as H.B. 1100, Act 7 was signed into law on Aug. 4. It increases the income limits to \$45,000

for homeowners and renters. It is estimated that under these expanded income limits, an additional 173,000 people will qualify for the program. Gov. Josh Shapiro joined the sponsors of the legislation in Scranton to hold a signing ceremony. We were grateful to hear from real beneficiaries of the program. My staff and I are looking forward to assisting you with your PTRR application in the new year!



# Pennsylvania Preferred Organics Bill Becomes Law

Earlier this year, Rep. Eddie Day Pashinski and I introduced H.B. 157, now known as Act 21 of 2023. The law takes the existing Pennsylvania Preferred Organics program and makes it permanent. Pennsylvania is already the top producing state for organic eggs, mushrooms, livestock and poultry – and third overall nationally in organic agriculture sales.

The program would be voluntary for current organic producers and any producers interested in transitioning to organic production. Consumers continue to demand local products, including organic products. The PA Preferred Organics program would not compete with other state producers but instead create opportunities for residents to identify and purchase locally grown foods more easily.

The program will continue to be administered by the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture. I look forward to Pennsylvania's continued growth in the organic agriculture space. This program will benefit Pennsylvanians in a number of ways.



## Around the District

AARP Picnic



Community Health



Middle Smithfield Township Historical Marker Dedication



Pocono Family



Monroe County Historical Association Raise Your Glass Event & Mansion Renovation Groundbreaking



National POW/MIA Recognition Day



Just Practicing



National Night Out





ily YMCA Gala



Eagle Scout Nathan Fritz



ing for a Just Contract



# ESU's New President

For over a century, East Stroudsburg University has upheld its esteemed reputation as an institution of higher learning. With nearly 30,000 ESU alumni living in Pennsylvania, this university has brought together a diverse group of students from the Commonwealth and beyond while remaining a cherished part of the Pocono Mountains. To preserve this sentiment, effective Nov. 2, 2022, the Board of Governors for Pennsylvania's State System of Higher Education (PASSHE) officially appointed Interim President Mr. Kenneth Long, a valuable member of the ESU community for a decade, to serve as ESU's 14th president.

To mark his historic appointment, in April 2023, President Long was celebrated by his former coworkers, colleagues, and mentors, along with his wife, daughters, and mother, in a week-long inaugural celebration with the theme of "Creating Opportunities." President Long brings 35 years of experience in higher education and expertise in financial accounting, budgeting, and planning. In addition, President Long serves as the co-chair of PASSHE's Budget Team and is an Executive Board Member and Treasurer of the Eastern Association of College and University Business Officers.

President Long was initially appointed as Interim President of ESU during the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic. President Long and others led with action to guide and maintain the safety of the campus throughout the pandemic. When reflecting on this adversity in ESU's history, President Long said: "I am excited to watch our university return to the vibrant, active, and engaging community that we were prior to the pandemic. The interaction between students, employees, and the community is what makes ESU strong." This consensus rings true as ESU's resurgence welcomes the largest freshman class in three years.

In the upcoming years, President Long has several goals for the ESU campus:

- Completing construction of the new university center.
- Creating a dedicated facility to support the outstanding health science programs.
- Upgrading the academic and athletic facilities.
- Becoming the No. 1 four-year public university of choice for anyone seeking a post-secondary education.
- Creating greater accessibility and affordability to post-secondary education for everyone, regardless of background, ethnicity, gender, religion, or socioeconomic status.

In February 2021, President Long distributed and implemented 10 structural and operational actions to "educate [the] community on racism and promote an inclusive campus climate." Since then, the ESU campus has put words into action and enhanced the campus experience for all students by allowing them to gain insight into each other and the world around them.

In the past, the campus has also engaged in hands-on experiences through Latin Fusion dance classes, the Sign Language Club's silent dinner, the annual MLK Day of Service, and programs with groups like the Women of Color Initiative and Men of Color Alliance. At large, the Pocono community has been familiar with ESU's involvement for the past three years, hosting the Pocono Latin Festival and, this past June, hosting the Juneteenth Celebration. President Long asserts that these events and ESU's 100 clubs and organizations "offer students, employees, and the community the opportunity to learn from one another, grow together, appreciate what we have in common, and explore our differences."

For President Long, ESU would not be what it is without the students and the employees who make the campus' educational quality, environment, and overall culture extraordinary. With President Long's commitment to the betterment of ESU, he envisions a remarkable legacy of creating a "learning environment that is inclusive and equitable, where every student has the chance to thrive and reach their full potential, and continue to make ESU a place where Warriors belong."

As a previous ESU faculty member, I have witnessed President Long's revitalization of ESU. Since then, I have enjoyed working with President Long and ESU to bring needed funds to help the university compete on a 21st-century level. I congratulate President Long on his promotion and look forward to future collaborations that will make ESU even stronger.



# Expo Highlights

This year, my office has been fortunate to co-host or host two different expos – the Women’s Expo and Veterans Expo. We strive to support those who need our help most, and we find that expos are incredible one-stop shops for many folks. Federal, state, and local resources gather to provide information and services for constituents of all backgrounds.

Over the summer, my office worked with Rep. Tarah Probst’s office to reprise the Annual Women’s Expo at Stroudsburg High School. We were overjoyed to welcome over 100 attendees, connecting them to medical, economic, and other resources. The cooperation between my office and Rep. Probst’s offered a seamless and successful event for all.

This fall, my office hosted a Veterans Expo at the Middle Smithfield Township Community and Cultural Center. Too often, our veterans are overlooked by government services or need assistance to seek the help and support they are entitled to. I was fortunate enough to bring federal, state, and local resources together on Nov. 17 to serve those who served us.

The response was overwhelming, and I look forward to hosting this event again next year.





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**Property Tax /  
Rent Rebate Program**

**MORE** people eligible, **MORE** money back!

**Homeowners  
Income**

	<b>This Year</b>	<b>Next Year</b>
Up to \$8K	\$650	<b>\$1,000</b>
Up to \$15K	\$500	<b>\$770</b>
Up to \$18K	\$300	<b>\$460</b>
Up to \$35K	\$250	<b>\$380</b>
Up to \$45K	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$380</b>

**Renter Income**

	<b>This Year</b>	<b>Next Year</b>
Up to \$8K	\$650	<b>\$1,000</b>
Up to \$15K	\$500	<b>\$770</b>
Up to \$18K	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$460</b>
Up to \$45K	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$380</b>

Questions? Contact my office for help receiving your refund by calling (570) 894-7905 or emailing [RepMadden@pahouse.net](mailto:RepMadden@pahouse.net)



**Staff Acknowledgement**

I would like to thank my dedicated staff for their hard work and collaboration on this newsletter. Thank you Ariana Rivera, Elyse Nehring, Latisha Griffith, Jacob Pride, and Tom Andrews. I would like to give a special thanks to my departing Northeast Delegation Director Geoff Morrow for his exemplary work for our region. Geoff is a treasure, and I wish him well in his future endeavors!



*State Representative Maureen Madden*

***I'm here to help!***

***My team and I can help with:***

- **Property Tax/Rent Rebate**
- **Information about jobs, housing relief and utility assistance**
- **Prescription assistance for seniors**
- **Driver's License & Vehicle Registration**