

STATE REPRESENTATIVE

# Morgan Cephas

192ND LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT



Fall 2019

5921 Lancaster Ave. • Philadelphia, PA 19151 • (215) 879-6625

104-B East Wing • P.O. Box 202192 • Harrisburg, PA 17120-2192 • (717) 783-2192

📧 pahouse.com/Cephas • 📘 /RepCephas • 🐦 @RepCephas • ✉ RepCephas@pahouse.net

## Dear neighbor,

With the official end to an active summer, the work continues as my colleagues and I reconvene in Harrisburg for fall session where I plan to introduce a series of legislation and continue important efforts on the property tax working group. I want to thank House Democratic Leader Frank Dermody for appointing me to the task and I look forward to working with members from both sides of the aisle to find a commonsense solution to the tax debate afflicting many across the commonwealth. As your state representative, I am committed to serving you, ensuring that the needs of the 192nd Legislative District are part of the conversation, and keeping you well informed on state matters.

In this newsletter, you will learn more about the key issues I am addressing, my thoughts on this year's budget and get a snapshot of summer 2019. There have been many accomplishments that have brought us closer to our goal of creating a safe and equitable Pennsylvania for all and I will continue to fight for progress!

As always, my staff and I are available to help you with any state-related issues. Also, keep a look out and mark your calendars for several upcoming events and information sessions that we will host to close out the year.

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## The 2019-2020 Budget: Why I voted 'No'

This year's budget season was indeed laborious – leading to a final budget which consisted of allocations that satisfied some critical areas and others that completely missed the mark. Here's why I voted against it:

- ✗ No increase in the minimum wage
- ✗ Elimination of General Assistance
- ✗ Elimination of funding to the PA Department of Environmental Protection
- ✗ No funding for maternal mortality
- ✗ No funding for infrastructure improvements for public schools

While these reasons kept me from voting for this year's budget, there were certainly more favorable components of the budget that are now in place.

- ✓ EDUCATION: \$210 million increase for K-12 education and \$45 million increase in pre-K education – includes \$160 million for basic education plus \$50 million more for special education.
- ✓ WORK FORCE DEVELOPMENT: Support for job training and development through increased funding for career and technical centers and libraries and an increase in higher education funding for our state universities and community colleges.
- ✓ SMALL BUSINESSES: Additional money for small businesses allocated under the Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED).

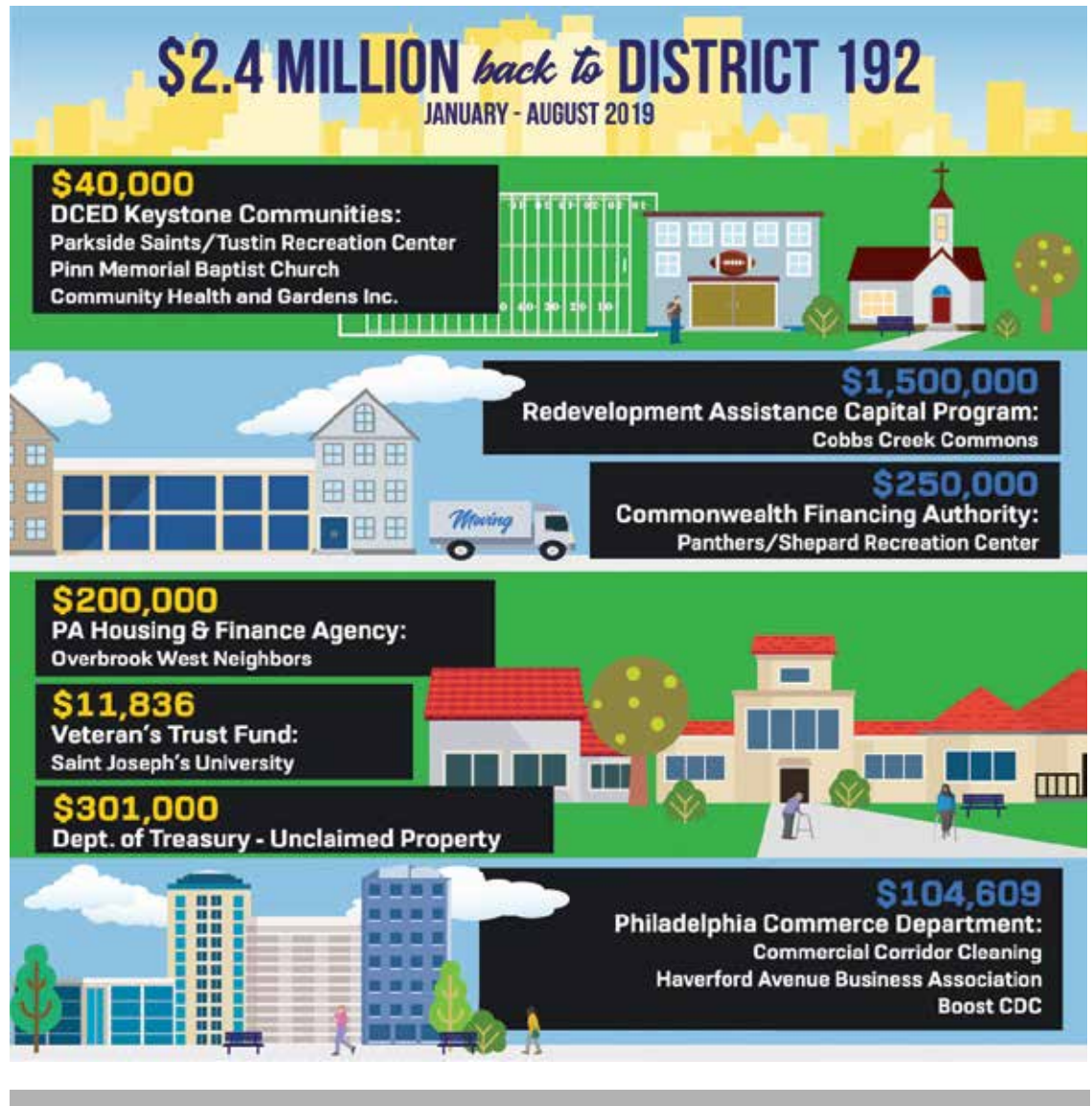
Despite these increases, the budget failed to support a statewide minimum wage, eliminated the General Assistance program and did not fund measures to repair the crumbling infrastructures of our public schools. At the start of the school year, many of our students returned to classrooms containing toxic hazards; over 10,000 Pennsylvanians – including veterans, the disabled, and domestic violence victims – lost cash assistance that helped them to meet some of their most basic needs; and many Pennsylvanians continue to work at jobs that do not pay a livable wage. The commonwealth's \$7.25 minimum wage is the lowest compared to neighboring states and has remained stagnant for well over a decade despite major rises in the cost of living. Despite our collective efforts, my colleagues and I were unable to preserve General Assistance, and it was officially cancelled on Aug. 1. Additionally, this year's budget lacks funding for the state Department of Environmental Protection, and the budget especially failed Pennsylvania's mothers and families by refusing to fund measures that address maternal mortality. Pennsylvania's most vulnerable citizens were not prioritized in this year's budget, and that's why I voted "no!"

# Bringing \$2.4 million back to the district

Since I took office in 2017, I have been laser focused on bringing financial resources and investments back to the neighborhoods I serve in the 192nd. As summer closes and we take up the fall legislative schedule, I want to announce that the 192nd has received \$2.4 million in various reinvestment grants. A series of these grants represent the very investments that will turn the tide in our communities ranging from housing repair for our seniors facing foreclosure to the revitalization of commercial space – most of which will create jobs and attract new businesses and more consumers.

I am a firm believer that we will only be able to solve the challenges we face in Philadelphia if our city and commonwealth work together to make strategic investments in local communities. As our city grapples with the issues of poverty and gun violence and looks at ways to tackle these issues, it is imperative for us to create opportunities through equitable development and state, local and community partnerships. That's what these grants represent.

I want to sincerely thank our partners – the PA Office of the Budget, the PA Department of Community & Economic Development, the Philadelphia Commerce Department, Sen. Vincent Hughes and Councilman Curtis Jones Jr. – for working tirelessly together to secure these resources. I look forward to announcing more dollars coming back to the district in the future.



## The Public Health Crisis: Gun Violence

The issue of gun violence looks different across the urban, suburban and rural communities of Pennsylvania. In Philadelphia, homicide rates have increased, and the City of Brotherly Love has the fifth highest rate of firearm homicide among large cities in the country.

In July, my colleagues and I successfully secured \$2.5 million – a 57% increase from last year – for the Philadelphia Gun Violence Task Force to continue efforts to hold gun traffickers accountable and get illegal guns off the street in Philadelphia. We cannot end this epidemic alone, and I was proud that Governor Wolf took an unprecedented approach by signing an executive order that

directs various agencies in his administration to create new state offices focused on violence prevention and reduction, expands programs that promote safety, refocuses departments on combatting gun violence as a public health crisis, and increases collaboration and data sharing between the public, government agencies and other states. These are great strides to tackle this issue, but we must do more. I am pleased to be among the members of the Philadelphia Delegation who are working together to push legislation to ban assault rifles, ban the sale of toy guns, expand background checks and much more.



# A Night to Remember: Night Market Overbrook

On June 20, I was able to bring the first ever Night Market Philadelphia to West Philly in partnership with The Food Trust and Overbrook West Neighbors. Night Market Overbrook hosted close to 17,000 people, 42 diverse food trucks and vendors including six local businesses and several new features. While a significant number of attendees were district residents, we were happy to welcome an almost equal number of attendees who had never been to the Overbrook area. In all, the event received over 1,500 Facebook impressions, over 300 attendee survey responses and had zero event-related incidents.

Thank you to everyone who was able to join in on the family-friendly, fun-filled night, which was a true testament to how our communities can and should be. None of this would be possible without the support of our sponsors, many of whom were new to the Night Market Philadelphia family, including Mann Music Center, Keystone First- A Family of Health Plans, Overbrook School for the Blind, Please Touch Museum, Friends of the Dell Music Center, West Philadelphia Financial Services Institution, Saint Joseph's University, City Avenue Special Services District and MainLine Health.



# Summers in the 192nd



## SUMMER JAM

I joined state Rep. Joanna McClinton, Rep. Movita Johnson-Harrell, ACHIEVEability and partners to host the 60th Street Health and Wellness Summer Jam located along 60th and Market streets! This was an event for all ages and served as a center for wellness services, children's activities, and community resources.



## FRUIT AND VEGETABLE VOUCHERS

For a second year, my office partnered with the Philadelphia Corporation for Aging (PCA) to service close to 700 seniors with fruit and vegetable vouchers. This time around, we teamed up with the SHARE Food program to connect our neighbors to healthy and affordable food. With SHARE and my office, we were able to provide an easy and accessible location for seniors to redeem their vouchers and distributed approximately 1,770 lbs. of food through the senior box program.



## BLACK MALE ENGAGEMENT TOWN HALL ON VIOLENCE REDUCTION

For my second town hall meeting this year, I invited the community out for a deliberate conversation at Shepard Recreation Center. The conversation was led by the Mayor's Office of Black Male Engagement and focused on ways to provide support to young black men in the community while working to reduce the gun violence in our neighborhoods. Community leaders spoke about their efforts to engage those on the street corners and help to bridge the gap between supportive services and the community. Look out for more to come as we continue to build relationships and develop a network of resources to help move our communities forward.

## BUSINESS ROUNDTABLE WITH THE PHILADELPHIA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

I hosted the Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce at Saint Joseph's University to meet with numerous district small businesses to discuss resources and strategies for long-term success.





# Summers in the 192nd Cont'd



## BAKER RECREATION CENTER RESOURCE FAIR AND BASKETBALL TOURNAMENT

I collaborated with the office of Councilman Curtis Jones Jr. to stand with Baker Recreation Center in the fight against senseless gun violence. Baker's Where the Children Play event was an effort to help members continue their annual basketball tournament and take back their community!



## ROSE PLAYGROUND MURAL PROJECT

Congratulations to Rose Playground for working with Mural Arts Philadelphia to enhance the exterior of the recreation center in a fun and creative way! In only three weeks, Rose and Mural Arts worked at full capacity with community members to complete a mural of colorful roses. The creativity of the mural represents an image of growth and beauty not only for the playground, but also the surrounding community!

## DISTRICT DAY

In August, I hosted my 3rd Annual District Day with Councilman Curtis Jones Jr. and Sen. Vincent Hughes at the Tustin Recreation Center. District Day always serves as a hub for state services and family fun! Thank you to our sponsor, Independence Blue Cross, for helping us bring back the Senior Pavilion and for providing blood pressure and other health screenings to the seniors of the 192nd. The Welcome to Homecoming took us back to campus with a drumline, step show and basketball tournament made up of community members and the 19th Police District. Lastly, the Kids Zone housed several resources and interactive activities just for the little ones. We partnered with local community organizations to distribute over 100 book bags stuffed with school supplies to help our youth start the school year ready on day one!





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lpo.kaf.1019

## Upcoming Events

### Voting Machine Demonstration & Real ID Seminar

**Sunday, Oct. 20**

**After Service**

**African Episcopal Church  
of St. Thomas**

**6361 Lancaster Ave.  
Philadelphia, PA**

*Call my office for more information  
or if you have any questions.*

## My office can help you with:



- Car registrations, special tags, titles and license applications
- Information on financial assistance for higher education
- Unemployment compensation problems
- Birth certificate applications
- Pennsylvania income tax problems
- Disability plates and placards
- Questions with the Department of Human Services (food stamps, income assistance)
- Consumer complaints
- Complaints or questions about utilities and the PUC
- Complaints about state road conditions
- Questions about PennDOT
- PACE cards for senior citizens
- Complaints and questions with insurance companies
- Property Tax/Rent Rebate problems or questions
- Questions about the state lottery
- Local government officials' problems with state agencies