



CAPITOL UPDATE

State Representative **MAUREEN MADDEN**

Representing the 115th Legislative District

Summer 2020



Black Lives Matter March in Monroe County draws thousands. Demonstrators marched from Dansbury Park in East Stroudsburg to the Monroe County Courthouse in Stroudsburg.

Rep. Madden marches in Black Lives Matter protest in Monroe County

Caseem Johnson organizes Black Lives Matter march

On May 25th, 2020, George Floyd was arrested after allegedly using a counterfeit \$20 bill in a Minneapolis convenience store. The \$20 bill would tragically cost Floyd his life as upon arrest, former Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin fatally knelt on Floyd's neck for just under 9 minutes. A bystander caught the whole ordeal on video and posted it on social media, sparking not only national, but worldwide outcry. Protests began in Minneapolis the day after his death and have since spread all over the United States and across the globe. One of these protests was held in Stroudsburg on June 7th, founded and organized by 25-year-old East Stroudsburg North High School graduate Caseem Johnson.

1. **Can you tell me about your own experience with the Black Lives Matter movement? What does it mean to you personally?**

Caseem: My experience has been inspirational. After doing this protest and seeing people of all colors shouting, "black lives matter" shows unity, and that it is not "black vs. white" but more "right vs. wrong," or "everyone vs. racism." I never expected this big of a turn out, and now suddenly, I became the face of the movement in this area.

2. **Racism and police brutality have been a problem in America since its inception. What about the George Floyd murder was different for you?**

Caseem: Every time one of these videos went viral, I feel like someone always had a reason for why it happened: drinking, drugs, resistance, or something else. In this video, they had George Floyd detained and on the ground. The fact that the cop had his hands in his pockets while kneeling on his neck showed he did not see any threat, and that he knew he was about to take this man's life. It was blatant murder. This is the first time one of these videos brought tears to my eyes.

3. **How did you organize this protest?**

Caseem: At first, I was talking to my friend Nick Bishop. Nick's roommate asked him if he wanted to go on a jog, and Nick



REP. MADDEN DELIVERS OVER \$16 MILLION IN LEGISLATIVE GRANTS TO BENEFIT THE 115

The grants will benefit non-profits, environmental organizations, school districts and small businesses in the community. In light of the financial uncertainty due to the pandemic this assistance is crucial.

responded by saying, "I just don't feel comfortable doing that with everything going on." That sparked conversation about how sad it is that we, as black people, are genuinely scared for our lives wherever we go. I realized I did not want to bring my black child into a world that I did not try to change. I went on social media and took a poll on both Twitter and Instagram, asking if people would attend if I organized a protest in Stroudsburg. I received complete support from everyone, and one thing turned into another and suddenly there are 2,000 people there!

4. Did you experience resistance from anyone during the organization process or during the protest itself? If so, how did you deal with it?

Caseem: I got some comments from people saying things like, "You shouldn't do this. It is going to be bad. It's just going to start trouble." There were even some comments on Facebook from people threatening to run over protestors with their pick-up truck. I contacted Stroud Regional Police Department, and they were very supportive of our movement. They escorted us through the town, and it made me feel way more comfortable. The protest itself went smoothly; we did not experience any resistance.

5. In your own words, what is the importance of saying "black lives matter" versus "all lives matter"?

Caseem: When you say 'all lives matter,' it takes away from the problem at hand. Obviously, all lives matter. This would be a problem if it were happening to any race. An analogy I see all the time puts it into perspective: If your neighbor's house were on fire, you would not grab a bucket of water to throw onto your own house. You would go help the house that is on fire. Black people specifically are getting killed by cops disproportionately. That is why we have to say black lives matter.

6. Do you have any plans going forward to keep this momentum going?

Caseem: After the protest, the NAACP asked me if I wanted to join them. Monroe County United President Thomas Jones reached out to me as well, asking me to become the chairman of the youth committee. I accepted that position. Right now, we are working toward more community-driven programs. We want to give kids a place to go after school not only to keep them out of trouble, but somewhere they can learn the importance of treating everyone the same regardless of color. We have an idea called On the Same Team, where kids play basketball with the police. They would not be playing against the police, but on the same team as them.

7. These protests are not only happening in our own country, but others as well. What do you hope comes out of this movement? What do you see for the future of the U.S. if this continues?

Caseem: I just want to see equality. I want it to get to a point where we do not even have to say black lives matter anymore, and we are all on a level playing field. Like you said, protests are happening all over the world and it is gaining more traction than ever before. It is very important that we keep this momentum going.

Tenant mitigation legislation introduced by Madden to help renters during the COVID-19 pandemic

Reps. Madden and Mike Schlossberg have introduced legislation aimed at helping renters stay in their homes by establishing a tenant eviction mitigation bill package.

Both lawmakers said among the hardships Pennsylvanians are facing across the state due to COVID-19 is the fear of possibly losing their home. It is one of the most prominent fears, and for this reason they will introduce a bill package to help renters.

"We are on the brink of a housing crisis during the COVID-19 pandemic and we need to do everything we can to keep people in their homes," Madden said. "Our constituents are undergoing record levels of unemployment and hourly work reductions, and they now have to face the grueling reality of paying rent. While we work to protect our essential workers and our most at-risk people, it is our responsibility to ensure they are safe in their homes."

The bill package to help renters by establishing the Tenant Eviction Mitigation Program would accomplish the following:

- Require landlords to create a payment plan option for tenants who may have lost income due to a statewide emergency like COVID-19.
- Prohibit landlords from charging late fees on rent payments to tenants with lost income during a statewide emergency.
- Create a landlord-tenant mediation and counseling program to help resolve issues before an eviction is required.

On July 9th, Governor Tom Wolf signed a new executive order that protects homeowners and renters from eviction or foreclosure until Aug. 31, if they have not received assistance from a new program administered by the Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency (PHFA) or are not already receiving relief through one of several federal foreclosure moratorium programs or judicial orders.

We are here to help you with state-related issues

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, our office is taking precautions to keep our staff and our constituents safe. All in-office assistance will be scheduled through our legislative assistant, Marina. Each appointment will be set for a strict hour to allow time to sanitize between meetings.

Here are the steps for arriving at the office:

- Call the office number upon arrival to ensure the staff are ready and has been able to sanitize properly.
- Wear a mask while inside the building.

- A non-invasive temperature check will take place at the entrance.
- Hand sanitizer is available to use at the entrance and on each desk in the office.
- An appointment may be set by emailing Marina at MPurcaro@pahouse.net.

Stroudsburg Office: 570-420-2850
18 S. 9th St. Stroudsburg PA 18360.

Tobyhanna Office: 570-894-7905
354 Memorial Blvd. Tobyhanna, PA 18466

Madden thanks essential workers for help during COVID-19 crisis

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been an overwhelming number of workers and volunteers who have shown up every day, risking the chance of exposing themselves to the virus to assist others. Representative Madden would like to offer her appreciation to Feeding Families Ministries in Coolbaugh Twp., East Stroudsburg United Methodist Church and the Stroudsburg Wesleyan Church. Each location has been operating extensively to provide a safe way for families to receive food and pantry items.

With a smile on their faces and love in their hearts, volunteers and employees from all school districts have played a vital role in ensuring children are fed by handing out bags daily with breakfast and lunch. Without their assistance, many in the district may have been unable to feed their families during these financially difficult times.

To all the essential workers and volunteers in the community, and throughout the Commonwealth, Representative Madden and her staff would like to extend their sincerest gratitude for all your efforts.



Rep. Madden congratulates Tameko Patterson for her election as a member to the Council of Trustees of East Stroudsburg University.



The occasion is monumental due to Ms. Patterson being the first Black woman to be appointed to the position. "It is important that the council is representative of student population. The Poconos is very diverse: now we need to work on the inclusion part," Ms. Patterson stated. Her statement showcases the passionate stance she has toward rallying for equity for people of color.

Ms. Patterson has always been an active and dedicated leader in Monroe County. She serves as the president of the Greater Pocono Section of the National Council of Negro Women Inc. and is a member of Jack and Jill of America Inc.

As an advocate for education, Ms. Patterson is the first person of color elected as a School Board Director for the Stroudsburg Area School District and currently serves as the Board President, a member of the Joint Operating Committee for Monroe Career & Technical Institute, and a member of the Education Committee for the Rotary Club of the Stroudsburgs.

Madden supports laws that benefit her constituents

Rep. Madden has shown strong support for countless pieces of legislation designed to provide crucial statewide relief to those impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. This includes legislation signed into law by Governor Tom Wolf.

One law streamlines the process of applying for unemployment compensation for workers affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The law requires the Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry to waive the one-week waiting period, job search and work registration requirements for claimants under the disaster emergency. It also provides automatic relief from benefit charges for employers whose account would otherwise be charged and provides the secretary of Labor and Industry with the ability to adopt temporary regulations to ensure compliance with federal law.

A second law provides \$50 million for the Wolf administration to purchase medical equipment and supplies for hospitals, nursing facilities and emergency medical services to meet the urgent needs of patients and staff.

The Future is Organic ... Pocono Organics opens 381-acre farm

Rep. Madden participates in local business grand opening

Local dignitaries were on hand to welcome Pocono Organics to Monroe County.

Pocono Organics is a 381-acre organic farm, food market and cafe in Long Pond.

This sustainable property is composed of a 25-acre solar farm, a system designed to recycle rainwater to irrigate greenhouse crops, and is the home to 300,000 honeybees.

Visitors to Pocono Organics farm cafe can anticipate a nutritional learning experience about the soil-to-seed-to-plate journey! There is also a space for community and agri-tourist special events, calendar workshops, educational classes, wellness classes, and more.

This upcoming September, Pocono Organics and other community organizations will host The Crop Trust's Food and Forever Experience to celebrate the International Year of Plant and Soil Health. The goal of this event is to raise awareness of plant biodiversity.

Pocono Organics is now open to the public in a safe and socially distanced setting.





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■ **Register to vote and VOTE this November!**

Pennsylvania now offers vote-by-mail as an option for those who, for whatever reason, cannot vote in person, and Rep. Madden encourages anyone who is 18 or over to visit www.votespa.com, and register to vote either in person or by mail. Too many people mistakenly believe their vote does not count, and that could not be further from the truth. We are not nearly as active as we could or should be, but it is on each of us to do our small part to create big changes in our community. Never let someone else speak for you by voting while you stay home and don't engage in the electoral process. Every vote this November counts, so **VOTE!**

■ **Complete your Census and bring needed funds to Monroe County**

Have you ever wanted to write a check for \$20,000 and give it to a charity of your choice? By completing the Census this year, you can come very close and it will benefit your community in so many ways. Every person who is counted in the Census equals \$20,000 in federal funding over the next 10 years that can help our schools, hospitals, roads and community endeavors. A complete Census means needed funds for Monroe County and it takes less than five minutes to complete online at www.my2020census.gov.