

Wolf Extends Application Deadline for Rent, Mortgage Relief to Nov. 4

BY: [SAM ZERN](#) OCTOBER 6, 2020

On Monday, Gov. Tom Wolf quietly extended the application deadline for the state's COVID relief mortgage and rental assistance grant program to Nov. 4.

The program gives renters who qualify up to \$750 a month for a maximum six months paid directly to their landlords, and gives homeowners up to \$1000 a month for six months paid to mortgage lenders. Applications can be found on the Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency's [website](#).

First reported by LancasterOnline, Wolf cited the Emergency Management Services Code as giving him the authority to make the extension.

Applications were originally closed on Sept. 30, per the legislature's outline of the program in Act 24. All other eligibility requirements for the program remain the same as they were prior to the governor's extension, with applicants needing to document at least a 30 percent reduction in income or unemployment after March 1 as a result of COVID-19.

The Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency said in a press release that they are continuing to work on previously submitted applications and adding all new applications to the submission pool under review.

"We appreciate this extra time to help more Pennsylvanians receive rental and mortgage assistance and maintain their housing," Robin Weissman, PHFA executive director and CEO, said. "Our agency prepared for this contingency, so we were able to immediately relaunch both programs once we received word about the governor's emergency order."

Rep. Sue Helm (R-Dauphin), chair of the House Urban Affairs Committee, said on Tuesday that she is now urging her colleagues to act quickly on her legislation, HB 2868, which addresses concerns with the current rent and mortgage relief program, including changing the rent cap from \$750 to a percentage of the fair market value for housing, and requiring landlords institute a 12-month repayment plan for tenants who use the program. The legislation has received bipartisan support.

"I know the governor means well; however, simply extending the deadline to receive applications does NOT fix the problems with the program, something my legislation would do," Helm said. "House Bill 2868 will ensure that more homeowners, landlords and tenants who lost income due to COVID-19 restrictions will receive the help they need to stay in their homes. It needs to be passed by the General Assembly and signed into law by the governor as quickly as possible."

Her legislation was supposed to be voted on for second consideration during the Sept. 30 session last week. However, a positive COVID-19 case in the House Republican Caucus led to the cancellation of session, and the House will not be back until Oct. 15.

Meanwhile, none of the legislation in the Democrat-backed "Safe at Home" [bill package](#) has moved past committee. The House Democratic Policy Committee is holding a public hearing on legal aid for tenants facing eviction on Oct. 9.

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