

Legislation Text

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Urging the Pennsylvania General Assembly to appropriate the full \$350 million from the federal Homeowner Assistance Fund as soon as possible without imposing additional restrictions.

WHEREAS, The COVID-19 pandemic has wreaked havoc on the U.S. economy, leading thousands of homeowners in Pennsylvania and millions more across the country to fall behind on their mortgages and other housing-related expenses; and

WHEREAS, The U.S. Department of Treasury announced in late April 2021 that under the Homeowner Assistance Fund (HAF), part of the American Rescue Plan passed by Congress and signed into law by President Joe Biden, Pennsylvania will soon receive over \$350 million to help homeowners who have fallen behind on their mortgage payments, property taxes, utility bills, and other housing-related expenses as a result of the pandemic; and

WHEREAS, These federal dollars have the potential to save thousands of Pennsylvania homeowners from both mortgage and tax foreclosure once they are distributed; and

WHEREAS, Because of these pending funds, the President Judge of the Philadelphia County Court of Common Pleas of the First Judicial District of Pennsylvania has stayed all Philadelphia County Sheriff's Mortgage Foreclosure and Tax Sales until September 2021 to allow the HAF money to be disbursed to homeowners in distress due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and to establish a system to connect homeowners to said relief money; and

WHEREAS, By June 30, 2021, the Commonwealth must submit a plan to the U.S. Department of the Treasury for how it will utilize HAF funds over the next four years. The Pennsylvania General Assembly additionally must appropriate any COVID-related funds received from the federal government for new programs; and

WHEREAS, Failure to appropriate the funds before the General Assembly's summer recess could delay much-needed assistance for struggling homeowners for months, leading to unnecessary hardships such as foreclosures while homeowners wait for help to come; and

WHEREAS, This Council body urges the Pennsylvania General Assembly to appropriate the full \$350 million from the Homeowner Assistance Fund by June 30th and further requests that the General Assembly not include additional legislative restrictions beyond the guidance established by the Treasury Department; and

WHEREAS, In support of the Pennsylvania Save our Homes Coalition, this Council body further requests that the funds be allocated to the Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency (PHFA), to be used consistently with the federal guidance, and not to write the HAF plan into statute in order to ensure flexibility for future adjustments; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, THAT THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, Hereby urges the Pennsylvania General Assembly to appropriate the full \$350 million from the federal Homeowner Assistance Fund as soon as

possible without imposing additional restrictions.