



For Immediate Release  
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## **Cartwright Holds Listening Session with Area Agencies on Aging in PA-08, Highlights Resources for Seniors During COVID-19**

**Moosic, PA** – U.S. Representative Matt Cartwright (PA-08) today held a listening session with leaders of the Area Agencies on Aging. Agencies from Lackawanna, Luzerne, Monroe and Wayne Counties shared their questions, suggestions and concerns related to protecting older northeastern Pennsylvanians during the COVID-19 outbreak.

“As our communities deal with the coronavirus, the health and safety of our older adults is top of mind,” **said Rep. Cartwright**. “Our aging agencies in northeastern Pennsylvania are doing a great job adapting to the challenges posed by this virus and meeting our seniors’ demand for meal delivery, legal services, and even exercise, while observing social distancing guidelines. Our job in Congress going forward is to ensure the agencies have the resources to keep this up for as long as they need to.”

The agency representatives said that so far, they have been able to meet higher demand for meal delivery services for the elderly in their areas. They also discussed remote activities such as exercise classes and legal services, and how they are checking in on senior center participants while the facilities are closed.

Our focus has always been on the safety and happiness of the people we serve, and that remains true even as they stay home in order to be safe during this outbreak,” **said Jason Kavulich, Director of the Lackawanna County Area Agency on Aging**. “We are grateful for all the resources that Congress has provided for older adults during this time. Going forward, it will be important for there to be a streamlined process for us to tap into those resources.”

Mary Ursich, Administrator of the Wayne County Area Agency on Aging, pointed out that she is aware that scammers are looking to trick older adults into handing over sensitive personal information, claiming that it is to ensure they receive their stimulus check.

One of the things we’re concerned about are scams targeting our older residents,” **said Ursich**. “I’ve heard from more than a few people here who have told us that they’ve gotten calls asking for personal information so they can receive their stimulus check. We appreciate Congressman Cartwright for taking this issue seriously and recognizing the many other issues facing seniors in Wayne County.”

Cartwright pointed out that government agencies will not call anyone and ask for personal information over the phone, and that the prevalence of these scams was a key reason why he introduced [legislation](#) to federally fund senior legal hotlines, ensuring that older Americans have a reliable place to turn for legal help while practicing social distancing.

He also reiterated that most people — including seniors who rely on Social Security — will not have to take any extra steps in order to receive their direct cash payment of \$1,200 provided by the *Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act*. Thanks to a bipartisan effort of both Democrats and Republicans, the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) eliminated unnecessary requirements for older Americans and will use the information they already have on file.

The three COVID-19 relief packages enacted in March include several provisions to support seniors during the COVID-19 outbreak.

#### Nutrition Programs:

- Waived nutrition requirements for *Older Americans Act (OAA)* meal programs during the public health emergency related to COVID-19 to ensure seniors can get meals in case certain food options are not available.
- Provided \$850 million in emergency funding for The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) to help food banks face increased utilization and demand.

#### Health Care:

- Provided \$200 million to help nursing homes with infection control and to help states prevent the spread of COVID-19 in nursing homes.
- Strengthened the health professions workforce to better meet the needs of older adults, enhanced the nurse workforce training program and improved clinician training focused on geriatrics, all important to ensuring the long-term care of our seniors.
- Reauthorized rural health care services grants, as rural residents are disproportionately older and more likely to have a chronic disease, which makes them more at risk of contracting COVID-19.

#### Housing:

- For those with federally-backed mortgages, enabled forbearance to be granted, allowing six months without payment, interest, or fees, plus an option for an additional 6 month extension.
- Made available \$900 million for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program to help low income households heat and cool their homes.

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*Congressman Matt Cartwright is a member of House Democratic Leadership and the House Committee on Appropriations. He serves as Vice Chair of the Commerce-Justice-Science Subcommittee and is a member of the Financial Services & General Government and Military Construction-VA Appropriations Subcommittees. He also serves on the Committee on Natural Resources. Pennsylvania's 8th Congressional District includes Lackawanna, Wayne, and Pike Counties, and portions of Luzerne and Monroe Counties.*