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## 2024-25 State Budget Update: Public and Higher Education

This will begin a series of updates informing you about details on the passage of the 2024-25 state budget. The new budget does not raise taxes in any capacity on our hard-working citizens, and it sets an additional \$700 million in the Rainy Day Fund. The fund now holds \$7 billion to ensure fiscal stability in the event of a future economic downturn, which is designed to protect you, the taxpayer.

The state focused on providing necessary funds for our higher education system, knowing how vital it is for our future and economic opportunity for our college students. The state increased funding for the Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency (PHEAA) totaling \$573 million; Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education (PASSHE) totaling \$621 million; and community colleges totaling \$334 million. New key provisions include a new scholarship grant program and performance-based budgeting requirements for certain state-funded higher education institutions, enhancing transparency and accountability.

Additionally, the state budget created record funding for K-12 education, with substantial benefits for lower-income school districts. These investments ensure greater educational opportunities and support for our students.

In the 137th District, after new increases in education funding occurred in this year's budget, each of our three school districts will now receive:

- Bethlehem Area School District: \$55,327,772, in Basic Education Funding (BEF); \$10,145,020 in Special Education Funding (SEF); and \$6,299,704 in Ready to Learn Block Grant Funding (RTLBG).

- Easton Area School District: \$28,726,127 in BEF; \$6,652,994 in SEF; and \$1,960,934 in RTLBG.

- Nazareth Area School District: \$12,895,976 in BEF; \$2,712,565 in SEF; and \$476,529 in RTLBG.

## State-Owned Universities Freeze Tuition

The Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education (PASSHE) announced earlier this month it would again freeze tuition rates for in-state undergraduate students for the 2024-25 academic year.

The decision came after the Legislature approved a \$35.1 million, or 6%, increase in state funding for the universities as part of the 2024-25 state budget.

This is the seventh consecutive year the tuition rate will remain the same at all 10 universities. According to PASSHE, the repeated freezes save students nearly 25% in tuition costs compared to the price if tuition had risen at the inflation rate for the last six years.

## PHEAA Announces Financial Aid Seminars

The Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency (PHEAA) is hosting free webinars in August aimed at helping students and families understand financial aid and loan repayment.

The webinar titled "Deep Dive into Covering the Gap" will be offered at noon on Tuesday, Aug. 6, and at 6:30 p.m. on Thursday, Aug. 22. This one-hour session aims to help students and their families understand their bill and financial aid package, and determine what, if any, borrowing is needed to cover the difference between aid and actual cost.

The webinar titled "Financial Aid Timeline – Know What to Do When" will be offered at 6:30 p.m. on Thursday, Aug. 8, and again at noon on Tuesday, Aug. 20. This one-hour presentation will provide the starting points and web resources for effective research before, during and after your student makes post-secondary education decisions.

For a full schedule, and to register your participation, visit [pheaa.org/virtual](http://pheaa.org/virtual).

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