



## **Sullivan County Human Services/Housing Authority**

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Mr. Chairman, members of the committee and guests, it is my honor and privilege to speak with you today. Thank you for the opportunity to discuss how the programs funded by the Pennsylvania Housing Affordability and Rehabilitation Enhancement (PHARE) Fund work in a very rural area with active Marcellus Shale drilling. I am Mark Roinick, Director of the Sullivan County Housing Authority, Human Services and Veterans Affairs office.

With the initial PHARE funding round of 2012, my office requested and received an \$80,000.00 grant to develop the Sullivan County Rental Assistance Program. It was a one-time, short-term assistance program that provided three consecutive months' rent, or a security deposit plus two months' rent for households earning up to 75 percent of the county's median income of \$51,000.00.

A total of 68 adults, 41 children and 6 elderly residents (age 60 or over) were assisted throughout the course of this pilot program; with 52 households being served. Of those, more than 85 percent of the households had incomes at or below 50 percent of the median amount. Monthly rent amounts ranged anywhere from \$400.00 to over \$1,000.00 per month. Those familiar with housing issues during an energy development know about the existence of wide ranging rent prices.

This program partnered with the local Emergency Food and Shelter Program, which helped that program utilize all of their funding for emergency utility and mortgage assistance; and to support the county's two food pantry programs. Historically the emergency program would use the majority of their funding for rental assistance.

On paper this may not sound like much, but for a 100 percent Rural Class 8 county in North Central Pennsylvania, this PHARE opportunity was paramount. Sullivan County's 2010 census population is 6,428. There is only one municipality with both water and sewer lines and 37 percent of the county's acreage is owned by the state in the form of parks, forests, game lands and waters. The PHARE grant amounted to almost 64 percent of the total in-lieu-of-tax payments the Commonwealth made to Sullivan County in 2013.

Opportunity has been limited to develop new, safe and affordable housing units. Perhaps this hearing will also shed light on the need to work with some of the infrastructure barriers and programs to CREATE new housing in truly rural areas. Sullivan County's housing stock is at best limited, with most structures built before 1978; the year many federal guidelines use when determining lead-based paint existence. This rental assistance program was designed to work with current rental units, their landlords and tenants. And I believe that goal was achieved. But for most grant and affordable housing development opportunities; there is a roadblock in Sullivan County because of the lack of available water and sewer lines.

I am here to show my support for ongoing consideration and funding for creative housing approaches throughout Pennsylvania. Affordable and safe housing should be available for each Commonwealth citizen, no matter where they live in Pennsylvania. Based on the data gathered during administration of this program, I can tell you that funding opportunities through the PHARE program must continue and not be just a band aid for a housing crisis that not only affects the elderly and disabled, but also working and middle class families.

I would like to personally thank Brian and Bryce at the PHFA; Elizabeth and the Housing Alliance of Pennsylvania for their efforts in the PHARE fund programming development. I commend and appreciate their advocacy to have housing as a dedicated service component to the Impact Fee legislation.

Thanks again for the opportunity to share my experiences with the Committee.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mark E. Roinick". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "M".

Mark E. Roinick