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For Immediate Release
April 7, 2020

Mastriano: Senate Approves COVID-19 Emergency Measures for Local Governments *Remote Notarization Bill Included in Legislative Package.*

HARRISBURG – The Senate approved emergency measures today to help local governments respond to the COVID-19 public health emergency, according to [State Senator Doug Mastriano \(R-33\)](#).

[Senate Bill 841](#) would take a number of steps to ensure local governments can continue to operate during the coronavirus pandemic. The bill would:

- Allow local governments to provide greater flexibility on property tax deadlines.
- Permit local governments to conduct remote meetings.
- Give notaries emergency authorization to notarize documents remotely through the use of communications technology.

“This important COVID-19 package will help our state address the ongoing coronavirus public health emergency,” said Mastriano. “Lawmakers recognize the issues that need to be addressed, and everyone is reaching across the aisle and coming to an agreement on solutions. As this situation continues to change, working together in the best interest of all Pennsylvanians is paramount.”

Mastriano recently introduced [Senate Bill 1097](#), which would authorize remote notarization of documents. The bill received unanimous approval this week from the Senate State Government Committee, and language from that legislation was inserted into Senate Bill 841. Overall, the measure would bring Pennsylvania in line with other states, and modernize the notarization process by permitting audio-visual communications.

As part of Senate Bill 841, notaries would be able to conduct business remotely in order to meet the needs of local governments and individuals. A notary public would still be required to confirm a person’s identity and reasonably identify records, and an audio/visual recording of the notarial act would be required.

Additionally, the legislation authorizes local governments to extend deadlines for property tax discount rates to any date up until August 31. The bill also allows local governments to waive any fee or penalty for late payments of property taxes if paid in full by the end of the year. The provisions give local taxing bodies more flexibility to help local taxpayers who are struggling financially due to the COVID-19 crisis.

Lastly, the legislation would allow members of local governments to participate in meetings and conduct other business remotely during the governor’s disaster declaration. Additional requirements are included to ensure transparency of remote meetings, including provisions for public notice and posting minutes.

Additional time would also be allowed for businesses to contribute to educational scholarship programs in order to earn tax credits.

In addition to providing emergency provisions for local governments, the bill also reauthorizes the Pennsylvania Health Care Cost Containment Council, which is responsible for collecting and analyzing data about the cost and quality of health care in the state and making recommendations to reduce the cost of care.

The panel would be responsible for preparing a report on the effect of the COVID-19 disaster emergency on healthcare facilities, including expenses and lost revenue during the crisis to determine additional financial assistance.

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