

**For Immediate Release**

## County of Berks Press Release

*New assistance fund offers citizens a chance to help Berks veterans facing financial hardships*

**Reading, PA— 3/22/2022** — Even though it's been two years since COVID-19 first appeared in our community, many Berks Countians are still fighting to recover from the various effects of the pandemic. Among the populations hit hardest by the pandemic are those who have fought for our country. As such, the Berks County Department of Veterans Affairs has launched a new program that gives citizens a chance to say thank you and support local service members who have fallen on hard times.

The Berks County Veterans Temporary Assistance (BCVTA) program is a fund designed specifically to raise money to serve Berks County veterans and their families. Veterans will be able to request funds that can be used for necessities such as shelter, utilities, transportation and food. To qualify, the veteran must have experienced an event outside of their control within the past year that resulted in a sudden and unexpected loss of income and/or an increase in expenses. They must also demonstrate financial need by showing that their monthly expenses meet or exceed their gross household income.

“We are grateful to our veterans for their service and sacrifice,” Commissioner Michael Rivera said. “This is a great opportunity to help them in their time of need.”

The County is currently seeking donors and sponsors for this vital emergency program. The program will receive support and direct oversight from the Berks County Controller's Office. To maximize the number of veterans assisted, funds granted to a veteran through this program cannot exceed \$500 within a calendar year.

“As County officials, we constantly balance money spent within our budgets to keep taxes down and come up with creative ways to help our constituents,” County Controller Sandy Graffius said. “Ken Lebron has created a way for local citizens to help our veterans outside our budget constraints. Our Controller’s staff has agreed to oversee the BCVTA to set limits so we can help as many of our warriors as possible.”

For more information on the BCVTA program, contact Ken Lebron, Berks County Veterans Affairs Director, at (610) 378-5601 or [klebron@countyofberks.com](mailto:klebron@countyofberks.com). Donations can also be made directly to:

**Tompkins VIST Bank**  
1210 Rockland St.  
Reading, PA 19604  
Berks County Veterans Affairs  
Temporary Assistance Grant Fund (Private)  
Account: \*\*\*\*\*760

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