

SIGN-ON LETTER IN SUPPORT OF GENERAL ASSISTANCE

In 2012, the PA General Assembly and Gov. Tom Corbett enacted Act 80 which, among other things, eliminated the General Assistance (GA) program. GA provided a small amount of money — \$205 per month — to the most vulnerable individuals in Pennsylvania who were not eligible for any other programs: disabled or sick adults without children, domestic violence survivors, adults caring for someone who was sick or disabled, adults participating in alcohol and other drug treatment programs, and children living with an unrelated adult.

In July 2018, in a 7-0 decision, the Supreme Court agreed that in rushing to passing the law the General Assembly violated the procedural requirements of the state Constitution. The state will have to restore the General Assistance program, although it is not clear how long it will take for the state to adjust its systems to do so.

General Assistance should never have been eliminated. Ending the program caused widespread anguish and increased homelessness, as 68,000 Pennsylvanians immediately lost benefits and others no longer had a chance to receive them. While \$200 a month may not seem like much, it made a huge difference to many people. It made it possible for some people to have a roof over their head instead of living on the streets. It was the difference between life and death for some of our fellow citizens.

In light of the state Supreme Court decision, we call on the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania to expeditiously reinstate the General Assistance program.