

New Pennsylvania program takes aim at a big problem – homes in need of repairs

90.5 WESA | By [Kate Giammarise](#)

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Katie Blackley / 90.5 WESA



Living in a house her mother bought in 1960, Griffin lists the upgrades and repairs the Lawrenceville home could use — a new railing on the porch, work in the kitchen to repair old water damage, better insulation to keep out the cold and more.

“It needs a lot,” Griffin said.

Advocates and lawmakers say Griffin and others like her show the need for a new program, Whole Home Repairs, that is part of the just-passed state budget.

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The program received a \$125 million appropriation in the Commonwealth's 2022-2023 budget and has been hailed for its rare bipartisan support.

“When a house is falling down, that's not good for the Republicans or the Democrats that live in the neighborhood... This is one of those issues that transcends political boundaries,” said state Senator Dave Argall, a Republican representing Berks and Schuylkill Counties, who supported the bill.

Republicans have said they see the bill as a blight-fighting measure, but progressive Democrats, who championed it, have said that is only part of its purpose. They maintain the home repairs also will improve energy efficiency and resident health and help fight displacement of low-income residents in gentrifying urban neighborhoods.

“The Whole Home Repairs Act is really at the intersection of a number of different issues,” said state Rep. Sara Innamorato, D-Lawrenceville, who sponsored the bill in the House.

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Up to \$50,000 for repairs will be available as grants for low and moderate-income homeowners and loans to small landlords renting affordable units.

The timeline for when money will actually roll out is still unclear. The state's Department of Community and Economic Development is in charge of setting up the program; counties can then apply for the funds.

The funds are one-time money, which means there is no guarantee the program will be funded in future budgets.

"We know we have a multi-billion dollar problem on our hand, and we have \$125 million of one-time funding. So, we really have to treat this as a pilot program," Innamorato said.

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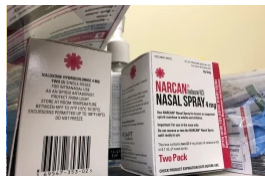
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