

## **Center for Rural Pennsylvania Comment:**

“I want to express appreciation to the Commission for its increased dedication of resources to the support of our rural communities,” said Dr. Laura Dimino, Interim Executive Director of the Center for Rural Pennsylvania. “At the Center, we highlight the unique needs of rural residents and inform decision-making across the Commonwealth, primarily through data and research. Caroline Griffin’s appointment ensures rural voices will be heard and prioritized in the Commission’s efforts to advance equity.”

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## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission Announces Caroline Griffin as Director of Rural and Civic Engagement**

**HARRISBURG** — The Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission (PHRC) today announced the appointment of Caroline Griffin as the first-ever Director of Rural and Civic Engagement, a newly created position designed to strengthen connections with rural communities and address disparities and discrimination across the Commonwealth.

The role was developed in response to insights Executive Director Chad Dion Lassiter, MSW gained during his statewide community tour, *PHRC on the Road: Building Pennsylvania’s Beloved Community* and the *Razor Sharp Barbershop Tour*. Both initiatives included discussions with Pennsylvanians about issues of racism, equity, and division. These conversations revealed a deep need for intentional outreach in rural areas, where residents often face unique challenges related to discrimination, limited resources, and a rural/urban divide.

“Rural voices matter, and this new role is about making sure they are heard and supported,” said Director Caroline Griffin. “We know that discrimination and inequities do not look the same in every part of the Commonwealth. By creating space for rural communities to share their experiences, we can build stronger bridges between urban and rural Pennsylvania while ensuring equity for all.”

Lassiter emphasized the Commission’s mission to lead with compassion and accountability. “Through the Beloved Community Tour and the Razor Sharp Barbershop Tour, we heard from people across the Commonwealth about the realities of discrimination. Rural Pennsylvanians told us they face challenges that are too often invisible in public discourse. With Caroline Griffin’s leadership, PHRC is taking an important step toward bridging divides, fostering belonging, and creating a more unified Pennsylvania.”



**Center for Rural Pennsylvania**

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“The experiences of my constituents in Schuylkill, Carbon, and southern Luzerne counties are often very different from those in other parts of Pennsylvania,” Senator David Argall (R-29th District) said. “I’m grateful the PHRC recognizes this fact and look forward to working with them to address issues confronting all areas of the Commonwealth.”

The Director of Rural and Civic Engagement will lead initiatives that:

- Examine systemic disparities in rural communities.
- Facilitate dialogue between urban and rural areas to reduce division and increase mutual understanding.
- Partner with local leaders, faith communities, schools, and grassroots organizations to address discrimination.
- Ensure PHRC’s resources and protections are accessible to Pennsylvanians in every corner of the state.

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