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For Immediate Release

## **PHFA celebrates 50 years of creating affordable housing in Pennsylvania**

*The agency leads numerous impactful housing programs and continues to innovate*

**HARRISBURG, PA** – In 2023, the Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency is celebrating its fiftieth year of helping Pennsylvanians find and keep affordable, stable housing. The agency has special promotions planned throughout 2023 to recognize this landmark year and to celebrate its staff and retirees for its half century of service to Pennsylvanians.

“Our agency was started 50 years ago with eight employees and a singular focus on funding affordable rental housing,” said PHFA Executive Director and CEO Robin Wiessmann. “Today, PHFA has grown to 314 employees and proudly offers a broad range of programs intended to help renters, homebuyers and homeowners find and keep housing that best fits their needs.”

“I think the legislative leaders and Governor Milton Shapp, who had the foresight to create the agency so many years ago, would be proud of how we have fulfilled their vision for providing affordable housing opportunities in Pennsylvania.”

During the past 50 years, the agency’s early focus on affordable rental housing has expanded to now include programs promoting homeownership, educating housing consumers, providing mortgage assistance during COVID, funding local housing initiatives, preventing home foreclosures, funding housing research, and much more.

“Time and again, PHFA has responded to changes in the housing marketplace with innovative and essential programs to address pressing needs, like offering affordable home loans that include down payment and closing cost assistance,” said Governor Tom Wolf. “Anytime people need help with housing, PHFA should be the first place they go to take advantage of its many housing programs. Congratulations to PHFA on its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary!”

During the early 1970s, when the agency was created, it was primarily focused on increasing the amount of affordable rental housing in the state by providing vital funding. In exchange for the funding, apartment owners agreed to keep their rental units affordable for several decades. Notably, during the past half century, PHFA has funded the construction or rehabilitation of 103,328 affordable rental units.

By the early 1980s, the agency’s leadership saw the need for affordable home loans that could help low- and moderate-income families who were ready for the responsibilities of homeownership. Over the years, its home loan programs have evolved in response to changing market conditions and the needs of homebuyers. By the early 1990s, the agency began servicing its home loans in-house, as well. Today, the agency services more than 73,000 home loans. This year, for the first time, PHFA’s portfolio of home loans was valued at more than \$5 billion and currently has a value of \$5.4 billion – an impressive achievement.

Also in the 1980's, the state legislature, in response to an economic downturn, created the Homeowners' Emergency Mortgage Assistance Program, or HEMAP, and charged PHFA with managing the program. HEMAP helps people who, through no fault of their own, fall behind on their home loan. It provides them with financial assistance so they have time to get back on their feet and resume their mortgage payments. Since its start in 1983, HEMAP has made more than 50,740 foreclosure prevention loans with a combined value of \$579 million. It also is widely recognized as a national model for effective foreclosure prevention and has been emulated by other states.

In the mid-1990's, PHFA's leadership recognized that better informed housing consumers would make smarter housing decisions that stayed within their budget and provided stable housing solutions. As a result, it created a network of private sector housing counselors located statewide to educate the public and provide accurate information for guiding their rental and home purchase decisions. The counseling services provided by these agencies are offered at no cost, as they are underwritten by PHFA. Today, 66 agencies with counselors certified by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development offer their services to Pennsylvania consumers.

Most recently, in 2012, the legislature charged PHFA with managing the Pennsylvania Housing Affordability and Rehabilitation Enhancement Fund (PHARE). This program was started to ensure housing affordability in the northern tier of the state when gas drilling associated with fracking began. Impact fees tied to gas production provide funding for a number of state programs, including PHARE. It has proven to be extremely popular with funding recipients because local organizations are given the freedom to determine how the money can best address their local housing needs. Since its start, PHARE has distributed more than \$239.6 million to preserve and expand affordable housing in all 67 counties, leveraging more than \$1 billion from other funding sources.

During its existence, PHFA has earned respect from its business partners and housing advocates by being innovative, staying responsive to community needs, and for continuing to be "the housing agency with a heart." Its establishment as an independent, state-affiliated agency and as a public corporation has given it the ability to stay nimble in the marketplace and to innovate with changing times. For instance, the agency is constantly adapting its home loan programs to respond to the shifting needs of the marketplace and consumers.

PHFA was created in December of 1972, at the end of the year. But its first board meeting wasn't held until January 1973, and it didn't become fully operational until September 1973. Knowing this history, the agency has elected to celebrate its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary with events and special promotions planned for throughout 2023.

Its logo has been redesigned to promote its 50-year anniversary and will be featured on agency paper and electronic correspondence. Customer and staff testimonials will be shared via video on social media, and web postings about key agency milestones are planned during the year. A celebration event is set for late spring to spotlight the agency's accomplishments and share key historical moments. Additionally, PHFA staff have started work on a time capsule that will be sealed for opening by the agency on the occasion of its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2072-73.

The public is invited to regularly visit the agency's website and follow its Facebook and Twitter channels for special messaging throughout the year highlighting key events from PHFA's history.

EDITORS: Historical photos from the agency's archives are available upon request to accompany your stories.

About PHFA

The Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency works to provide affordable homeownership and rental housing options for older adults, low- and moderate-income families, and people with special housing needs. Through its carefully managed mortgage programs and investments in multifamily housing developments, PHFA also promotes economic development across the state. Since its creation by the legislature in 1972, it has generated more than \$16.9 billion of funding for more than 191,870 single-family home mortgage loans, helped fund the construction of 103,328 rental units, distributed approximately \$239 million to support local housing initiatives, and saved the homes of more than 50,660 families from foreclosure. PHFA programs and operations are funded primarily by the sale of securities and from fees paid by program users, not by public tax dollars. The agency is governed by a 14-member board.

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