

MEDIA RELEASE



COUNTY OF ERIE
OFFICE OF THE
COUNTY EXECUTIVE

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Erie County will establish Community College; State Board of Education casts official vote

Erie, PA – The Pennsylvania State Board of Education has cast their final vote: Erie County will establish a community college.

The final, formal vote took place Wednesday, July 8, with the board voting 10-5 in favor of the community college plan.

Effective immediately, County Executive Kathy Dahlkemper and County Council have 60 days to establish a board of trustees who will make all future decisions about the Erie County Community College. The County Executive will appoint two members; each County Council member will appoint one, for a total of nine board members.

“Data proved that Erie County meets all of the criteria for establishing a community college,” Dahlkemper said. “The support from local business owners, community leaders and educators has been unmatched. We can’t express the extent of our gratitude. I extend a very special thank you to Empower Erie for all their work leading up to this day. And now, together, we can be proud to finally have this opportunity to meet the needs of all Erie County students.”

“Community Colleges educate approximately 40% of college students nationwide, and more than half of all low-income students,” said André R. Horton, chairman of Erie County Council. “Even though they perform at that level, they only received 27% of the COVID-19 Cares Act funding. Despite clear evidence that community college students need relatively more support to succeed, states invest more in institutional resources and financial aid for students attending four-year institutions. Many of those students already have distinct advantages in family wealth and academic support needs. Today’s Pennsylvania Board of Education vote ratifies and affirms Erie County as Pennsylvania’s 15th and newest community college. It’s a great day for Erie County residents.”

After a two-day virtual evidentiary hearing that took place June 10-11, the board initially voted 9-6 for the Erie County Community College plan. Six witnesses testified on behalf of Erie County and Empower Erie, and three witnesses testified on behalf of the Northern Pennsylvania Regional College and Sen. Joseph Scarnati III.

For more information, including a full timeline of the application, visit eriecountypa.gov.

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