



## NEWS RELEASE

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

State Rep. Robert E. Merski

D-Erie

[www.pahouse.com/Merski](http://www.pahouse.com/Merski)

### **House passes Merski bill to help Pennsylvania fight blight**

**HARRISBURG, June 13** – The PA House today passed state Rep. Bob Merski’s bill that would make it easier for cities to fight blight.

Merski, D-Erie, said his legislation ([H.B. 255](#)) – which passed by a vote of 124-79 – would create a grant program to allow cities to establish code enforcement programs or strengthen existing ones.

“Today’s House action brings us a step closer to addressing a major urban enemy,” Merski said. “Vacant, distressed properties have been a persistent problem for Erie and other communities, but many lack a dedicated budget for code enforcement, so these efforts often go by the wayside. At the same time, the cost of failing to address the problem costs cities millions in lost property tax revenue and unrealized investments.

“My bill would help us break that cycle by giving local governments the resources they need to turn things around. Cities could use the funding to establish new code enforcement programs or hire more code enforcement officers to fortify existing programs, all with an emphasis on upgrading or removing abandoned and structurally unsafe structures and dwellings.

“Cities would also have the ability to join forces in fighting blight by entering into cooperative agreements.”

The bill would establish the Municipal Property Maintenance Code Assistance Fund, administered by the Department of Community and Economic Development. Municipalities would be required to provide matching funds and would be eligible for grants for a maximum of three consecutive years.

Also under the legislation, municipalities would be able to establish their own mitigation funds for neighborhood blight remediation funded by penalties assessed for code

violations, and counties would be able to adopt property maintenance ordinances and enforce code violations in municipalities without their own maintenance code.

The bill now heads to the state Senate for consideration.

###

**CONTACT: Liane Leshne**  
**House Democratic Communications Office**  
**Cell: 978-549-1868**  
**Email: [lleshne@pahouse.net](mailto:lleshne@pahouse.net)**