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From the desk of Rep. McNally

## Give due credit to local advocates, not Governor, for Appalachian Community Grant Program Funding

I appreciate the [Vindicator's coverage](#) of funding announcements from the Appalachian Community Grant Program, however, we shouldn't expect so little for ourselves. This is an important and new investment in our part of the state, one that paved the way for revitalization and transformation in our area. That is in no small part because of the unique collaboration of regional stakeholders that made their presence known in Columbus. Passionately and professionally, they put their best foot forward in pursuit of making our communities stronger, and that effort is where our brighter future lies.

These advocates like Lyle Huffman and Guy Covelli with the Chamber, Struthers Mayor Catherine Cercone Miller, the Port Authority, Kristen Olmi and her team, Josh Prest, local businesses, local nonprofits, and most importantly Jim Kinnick and his team at Eastgate Regional Council of Governments came together in common purpose in a way we haven't seen in a long time. Despite the disadvantage that comes with being the farthest drive to the Statehouse, they put in the hours, took meetings, [wrote letters](#), made phone calls, and dropped in on decision makers. Our neighbors did right by us in bringing all the pomp and circumstance that Mahoning Valley deserves.

You would think, given the Governor's four appearances in the last year or Al Cutrona's "[fair share of the pie](#)" comments, that this local grandeur was being recognized and reciprocated by the state. Am I happy we received some funding? Absolutely - and a large portion of that credit should be given to the federal American Rescue Plan that gave us those dollars and President Joe Biden and U.S. Senator Sherrod Brown who passed that law, even if the Governor never acknowledges them. But should we be satisfied and thrilled when Eastgate receives \$20M of the \$156M requested (less than 13%) from a \$500M "pie" designed to strategically invest in projects that will result in sustainable and transformational outcomes and include health care, infrastructure, and workforce components?

No.

Of the top [10 most populous towns in Appalachia](#), four are in Mahoning Valley. At nearly [60k](#) the City of Youngstown has more residents than all of Lawrence County ([56k](#)) who received just over \$152M, or 7.5x more, funding in the final round of grant making than Mahoning County ([225k](#)). The Ross County Commissioners secured just over \$154M for their regional project. [77k](#) people live in Ross County. If you divide the 32 county Appalachia region into 4 economic development districts, each would've received \$125M. Ours did not, despite having significantly higher potential impact when it comes to the downtown revitalization efforts these dollars were meant to target.

However you slice this “pie,” we deserved a bigger piece.

I hope our advocates keep their appetite for real transformation and keep showing their spirit in Columbus. Let's work together to keep meeting the needs you brilliantly championed for. Stay hungry.

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