

Lehigh County to Premiere 'Pardon Me' Documentary Highlighting Pathways to Second Chances

With one in three Americans carrying a criminal record, the April 29 screening in Allentown explores how pardon access can remove barriers.

ALLENTOWN, PA, UNITED STATES, April 15, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- One in three Americans has a criminal record and even decades after completing their sentence, that record can continue to block access to employment, housing, education, and economic mobility.

On Wednesday, April 29, [Lehigh County Drug and Alcohol](#), in partnership with

the Center for Humanistic Change and the Office of the Lehigh County Public Defender, will host a public screening of 'Pardon Me' at Allentown Symphony Hall. The event will examine how pardons can remove long-standing barriers and expand access to opportunity for individuals, families, and communities.

“

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Grace Vangelo, Advisory Board Chair for Lehigh County Drug and Alcohol

"Pardon Me" is a short documentary that follows two individuals navigating the pardon process, one of whom ultimately receives a pardon, while also featuring civic leaders who examine how second chances can strengthen families and uplift entire communities. The film makes the case that pardons are not just personal, they are economic and community-driven solutions.

"Pardons are about recognizing growth and removing barriers that no longer reflect who someone is today," said

Grace Vangelo, Advisory Board Chair for Lehigh County Drug and Alcohol. "When people have



Efforts to expand pardon access across Pennsylvania are gaining traction. Lehigh County Drug and Alcohol highlights what's changing now and how expanded access can remove barriers to employment, housing, and stability statewide.

completed their sentence and worked to rebuild their lives, we have an opportunity as a community to support true reentry.”

“We say people should rebuild their lives after they’ve paid their debt to society, but then we continue to deny them access to jobs, housing, and opportunity,” said Tobey Oxholm, Executive Director of The Pardon Project. “That contradiction is exactly what pardons are meant to address.”

Individuals with past convictions can be excluded from:

- Gainful employment and professional licensing
- Higher education and student aid
- Business loans and homeownership
- Military service and teaching certifications
- Jury service and full civic participation

These barriers can contribute to long-term economic instability and limit community growth. Pardons, by contrast, can restore rights and, in Pennsylvania, lead to expungement of the offense offering a true second chance.

The program will feature remarks from Kim Makoul, Chief Public Defender of Lehigh County; Lehigh County Executive, Joshua Siegel; and leaders advancing pardon access and reentry efforts, followed by a screening and panel discussion with Tobey Oxholm, Executive Director of the Pardon Project, and other community stakeholders.

The event is free and open to the public. Doors open at 5:00 p.m.

Event Details:

Pardon Me Documentary Screening

Wednesday, April 29, 2026

Allentown Symphony Hall | 23 N. 6th Street, Allentown, Pa. 18101

Doors open at 5:00

[Watch the Trailer](#)

Hosted by Lehigh County Drug and Alcohol, Center for Humanistic Change, and the Office of Lehigh County Public Defender.

More Information and register: [Pardon Me Documentary Screening Registration](#)

The poster is designed to look like a movie theater screen with red curtains. At the top, it says "SCREENING: PARDON ME". Below that, there's a "DID YOU KNOW?" callout, a "Watch Trailer" QR code, a central film still with the title "PARDON ME", and a "Registration Form" QR code. A yellow "FREE" tag is in the bottom right. The date "APRIL 29, 2026" is in a red banner. The schedule is: 5 PM - 6 PM | Doors Open; 6 PM - 6:35 PM | Film Screening; 6:35 PM - 7:30 PM | Q&A Session. The location is "ALLENTOWN SYMPHONY HALL (23 N 6TH ST, ALLENTOWN, PA 18101)". Logos for CHC, Lehigh County, and the Office of Public Defender are at the bottom. The bottom of the poster shows rows of red theater seats.

Behind every pardon is a person ready for a fresh start. “Pardon Me,” premiering April 29 in Allentown, Pa., spotlights efforts to expand access to pardons and why it matters now more than ever.

About Lehigh County Drug and Alcohol

Lehigh County Drug and Alcohol is the county's central agency for planning, funding, and coordinating behavioral-health services related to substance use and recovery. The department works closely with treatment providers, healthcare systems, schools, law enforcement, and community partners to deliver prevention programming, screenings and assessments, outpatient and inpatient treatment referrals, case management, and recovery supports. Recent investments, guided by community need and supported in part by opioid settlement funds, have expanded local treatment capacity and harm-reduction services, including Narcan distribution and community education initiatives. Lehigh County Drug and Alcohol is committed to reducing barriers to care, promoting evidence-based practices, and supporting people and families on the path to sustained recovery. To learn more about county services and local resources, visit RiseAboveOpioids.org or contact Lehigh County Drug and Alcohol.

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