



## **2022 County Priorities End of Year Status Update**

CCAP members identified a total of seven priority issues for 2022. Grassroots activity on the priorities began following their adoption at the 2021 Fall Conference. After a formal announcement in January, officers and staff launched efforts to work with the General Assembly and the administration to introduce and advance proposals throughout the year. This report provides an update on the status of each priority issue at the close of the 2021-2022 legislative session.

### **Appropriate Funding to Support the Crumbling Mental Health System**

After confirmation that the county mental health base would not receive an increase in FY 2022-2023, despite ongoing county and local coalition efforts, counties shifted focus to continued education and allocation of the \$100 million in federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds. Designated as a part of the FY 2022-2023 budget, [Act 54 of 2022](#) created the Behavioral Health Commission for Adult Mental Health, which was tasked with recommending how to spend \$100 million of one-time federal ARP funding to support adult mental health needs. In October, the Commission released its approved [report](#), which focused on investments in workforce, criminal justice and public safety and expanded capacity, and recognized that an increase in county base funds in future state budgets remains critical.

With limited time left in the 2021-2022 legislative session, there was no movement on legislation to allocate the \$100 million one-time funds for adult mental health based on the recommendations of the Commission. Communities will now have to wait until the new session convenes in January to see action on these investments in workforce, criminal justice and public safety and expanded capacity. While this \$100 million is not the long-term, sustainable investment needed from the state to rebuild the mental health system, these dollars can still have a positive impact in the absence of increased General Fund support for county mental health. Counties strongly support the Commission's call for an increase in county base funds for the long-term stability of the system, and look forward to partnering with the new Administration and General Assembly early in 2023 to ensure that growing mental health needs are covered adequately and sustainably as a part of the 2023-2024 state budget.

### **Human Services Workforce Crisis**

Counties are responsible for providing critical services to support the needs of our citizens and our communities that are impacted by drug abuse, mental illness, developmental disabilities, and child abuse and neglect. While counties have continued to advocate for increased funding to support services that protect our most vulnerable citizens for years, the recent workforce crisis has only compounded an already dire situation, threatening counties' abilities to adequately meet increased service demands and fulfill community needs.

CCAP monitored and supported legislation that would assist the human services workforce with recruitment and retention, as well as encourage the state to take a more active role in promoting the importance and benefits of civil service employment throughout the commonwealth. While none of these pieces of legislation made it to the Governor's desk before the end of the 2021-2022 session, discussions surrounding legislative opportunities for expanded benefits, training programs and career pathways are ongoing.

### **Broadband Expansion**

The collective future of Pennsylvanians hinges on addressing the challenges to broadband expansion that are preventing access to opportunities and information to many of our residents. To this end, at its August meeting, the CCAP Board approved the creation of a Broadband Task Force to help direct specific county asks as part of the statewide broadband planning process, as well as provide a timely and effective feedback loop to assure CCAP can fully represent Pennsylvania counties as critical stakeholders. The Task Force met five times during the fall to discuss and provide feedback on the Pennsylvania State Broadband Plan, including data from counties collected through the County Broadband Survey.

Information and discussion from the Task Force continues to be carried to the Pennsylvania Broadband Development Authority (PBDA) through CCAP's seat on the Data and Mapping subcommittee, where executive director Lisa Schaefer serves as chair. The Task Force will continue to provide county input and feedback as the state works to develop its five-year action plan for broadband development, deployment and access as required under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law.

On Friday, November 18, the FCC released the pre-production draft of the new broadband maps for public input and challenge. These draft maps will display location level information on broadband availability throughout the country and will allow people to search for their address, and review and dispute the services reported by providers at their location. The FCC will also continue to accept bulk challenges to the reported availability data from state, local and tribal governments as well as other entities to continually improve and refine the broadband availability data. The pre-production draft maps are an important first step forward in building more accurate, more granular broadband maps. Additionally, the Authority, through their agreement with Penn State Extension, will continue to work with counties and other stakeholder entities on compiling broadband data and information to ensure Pennsylvania has accurate challenge mapping. These maps will be a critical component in determining how much of the \$42 billion in federal funding the commonwealth will receive for broadband infrastructure deployment.

Both the CCAP Annual Conference and Fall Conferences featured general session programming on state broadband efforts and CCAP is continuing to explore opportunities for information sharing between counties and identifying an avenue for regular updates on broadband programs and funding as they become available.

### **Appropriate Funding and Reform for the Children and Youth System**

CCAP continued to monitor several juvenile justice reform bills, which would provide for cost savings to the juvenile justice system, as they moved through the Senate. Unfortunately, they were not passed before the end of session and will need to be reintroduced in 2023.

Additionally, CCAP sent letters to the Governor's Office and relevant committee chairs in the House and Senate expressing concerns about the complex case issue that is burdening counties and the child welfare system. With an increase in children and youth in need of mental or behavioral health placements for whom no provider is willing to accept, there is a critical lack of appropriate placements for these children and counties need the commonwealth to step in and assist with this issue.

The Pennsylvania Children and Youth Administrators (a CCAP affiliate), through the leadership of executive director Brian Bornman, continues to participate in weekly workgroups on the development of the statewide enterprise case management system, the Child Welfare Council, the Universal Assessment Implementation Team, and other state workgroups responsible for developing policy.

### **Promote Election Integrity**

CCAP continues to advocate for resolving administrative issues and gaps within the Election Code. Throughout the end of fall session, there was no further movement on legislation that would amend Act 77. However, CCAP has continued to monitor and offer comments on Election Code bills that could affect how counties conduct their election administration duties. Counties look forward to partnering with the incoming administration as well as the General Assembly and its newly elected legislators on election-related legislation, including expanded pre-canvassing time and moving the mail-in application deadline, that will assist counties in administering secure and accurate elections in the upcoming 2023-2024 session.

### **911 Funding and Reauthorization**

CCAP is developing a legislative education strategy to help legislators better understand the county role in 911 response and dispatch as well as the history of the 911 funding formula and surcharge fee. Counties have also been working on education related to 988, aiming to understand how the two systems correlate and how a surcharge for 988 may impact 911 funding. With several provisions of the 911 statute, including the current funding formula, set to sunset in January 2024, it will be critical to hit the ground of the new legislative session running, educating and preparing the new administration and General Assembly for a reauthorization and fee increase. Additionally, the closing general session of the CCAP Fall Conference contained programming related to the history of funding for 911 to ensure members are ready to engage their legislators in reauthorization discussions during the 2023-2024 session.

### **Funding and Resources for Elections**

The FY 2022-2023 state budget included \$45 million in state funds for election integrity grants to counties, a substantial and previously unseen investment by the state in county elections. The grant program, administered by the Department of Community and Economic Development

(DCED), came with several conditions that may be challenging for some counties to meet. For instance, under [Act 88 of 2022](#), counties must meet additional administrative requirements, including strict pre-canvassing and canvassing timelines, ballot processing requirements and other postings that impact current election administration processes. Furthermore, the grant funding is restricted to certain uses, including certain poll staff and training, physical security and transparency, specified expenses related to polling equipment and ballot printing costs. Counties did not receive any statewide funding to administer elections outside of this optional grant program.