

LEGISLATIVE BULLETIN

COUNTY COMMISSIONERS ASSOCIATION OF PENNSYLVANIA COUNTY PRIORITIES SPOTLIGHT: CAPITOL EVENT CALLS FOR INCREASE IN COUNTY MENTAL HEALTH FUNDING THE VOICE OF PENNSYLVANIA COUNTIES

COUNTY PRIORITIES SPOTLIGHT: CAPITOL EVENT CALLS FOR INCREASE IN COUNTY MENTAL HEALTH FUNDING

County leaders from across Pennsylvania gathered at the Capitol on May 9 to highlight Mental Health Awareness Month and call for increased county mental health funding. During the event, county leaders called on the General Assembly and Shapiro Administration to take immediate action to increase funding for county mental health services, which leaders say are on the verge of collapse. To avoid a complete collapse of the system, counties leaders stood together and called for a significant investment for community mental health services for the 2024-2025 fiscal year – an increase of \$250 million above current funding levels.

County leaders, including Michael Rivera, Berks County Commissioner and 2024 CCAP President, Annie Strite, Cumberland/Perry Mental Health Administrator, Warden Leslie Loveridge of Indiana County, and Berks County District Attorney John Adams, shared local perspectives of grappling with the challenges of the faltering mental health system. For years, counties have been struggling to maintain community-based services such as outpatient treatment for adults and children, crisis intervention and support for individuals leaving state facilities. As noted by each of the speakers, chronic underfunding of the community mental health system comes with significant challenges and difficult decisions that must be made. The message from counties was clear: "We cannot afford to bicker or play games with something as important as the mental health of our population. While awareness is a wonderful tool, we must eventually turn that awareness into action."

Pennsylvania counties urge the General Assembly and Administration to seriously address county mental health funding when they in Harrisburg, given the severity of the situation. To support counties' request for increased mental health funding, CCAP produced a report that includes results of a recent county survey asking how counties would use additional funding to expand existing services or build new ones based on their communities needs. The report, along with additional information and resources on this top county priority, can be found [here](#).

To view the full press conference, click [here](#).

PTSI BILL ADVANCES TO THE SENATE

House Bill 1632, introduced by Rep. Jennifer O'Mara (D-Delaware), was approved by the House on May 8 and is now before the Senate for consideration. This legislation creates a presumption that post-traumatic stress injury (PTSI) is a compensable benefit for workers' compensation for first responders. Prior to final passage, HB 1632 was amended on the House floor to include several key changes, including clarifying who can apply for compensation and when; that a person must be diagnosed with post-traumatic stress injury by a licensed psychologist or psychiatrist and cannot file a claim more than three years after a diagnosis; and the type of incidents and traumatic events that would qualify a person for compensation benefits.

While HB 1632 focuses on PTSI as a workers' compensation benefit, counties believe that efforts to support first responders' mental health must ensure community resources are available to support their healing and improve their mental health.

NTIA APPROVES PENNSYLVANIA'S BEAD VOLUME II PROPOSAL

On May 14, the Pennsylvania Broadband Development Authority (PBDA) announced that the Department of Commerce's National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) approved Pennsylvania's Volume II Initial **Proposal** for the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) program. This approval will enable Pennsylvania to request access to the \$1.16 billion in federal funding made available last year through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law ("BIL") and begin implementation of the BEAD program.

PBDA's Volume II proposal outlines Pennsylvania's broadband service implementation efforts including local coordination, the subgrantee selection process, implementation activities, labor standards and workforce readiness, low-cost service options and middle-class affordability. With Initial Proposal – Volume II approval, the PBDA now has one year to submit a Final Proposal to the NTIA that details the outcome of the subgrantee selection process and how the state will ensure service to all unserved and underserved locations. Once that final plan is approved by the NTIA, the PBDA will start a four-year implementation process across the Commonwealth.

In addition to this announcement, counties are reminded that the current map challenge period remains open through Thursday, May 23. This map challenge will determine which Broadband Serviceable Locations (BSLs) and Community Anchor Institutions (CAIs) will be eligible to be served by BEAD funded networks. This is different from the previous FCC map challenge process, which was used to drive the overall BEAD allocations to the states; the federal law now allows states to use its own maps instead of the FCC maps. More information on BEAD and the map challenge process can be found [here](#).

IFO TREASURY WINDFALLS BOOST REVENUES

The state's Independent Fiscal Office (IFO) released an update regarding collections of **General Fund revenues**, which highlighted the impact of unprecedented fund balances and historically high interest rates on the state's collections for the current fiscal year..

The IFO projects that interest earnings on General Fund collections in FY 2023-2024 will reach \$780 million, an increase of \$328 million from the prior year. However, in FY 2024-2025, although interest rates are expected to remain high until spring 2025, a decrease in available cash resulting from a General Fund operating deficit is projected to reduce Treasury earnings to \$600 million. Looking ahead, a \$1 billion decline in the General Fund under current rates would lead to a \$50 million revenue reduction, while a 1% drop in interest rates would result in a \$150 million revenue reduction.

The IFO is releasing its initial revenue estimate for FY 2024-2025 on Monday, May 20, as well as revisions to its FY 2023-2024 estimate and recent economic trends and implications for General Fund Revenues. Registration for the presentation can be found on the **IFO's website** and the report will be posted after the presentation concludes.

CCAP RESOLUTIONS FINAL REMINDER

During the end of May and beginning of June, CCAP policy committees will be holding their annual virtual meetings to consider resolutions amending the **Pennsylvania County Platform**, CCAP's comprehensive policy document determined by counties.

All CCAP members are invited to review the Platform and to send any proposed resolutions for additions, changes or deletions to CCAP Government Relations staff at PACountiesGR@pacounties.org, or to discuss them with CCAP policy committee chairs.

A membership discussion and vote on the resolutions will be held in conjunction with the CCAP Annual Conference from August 4-7 in Gettysburg, Adams County. An overview of the process, timeline and related materials can be found on the CCAP Policy [webpage](#). Deadline to submit resolutions for consideration by policy committees is **May 28, 2024**.

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