

LEGISLATIVE BULLETIN

COUNTY COMMISSIONERS ASSOCIATION OF PENNSYLVANIA THE VOICE OF PENNSYLVANIA COUNTIES

COUNTY PRIORITIES SPOTLIGHT: COUNTY PRIORITIES IN THE BUDGET

On Tuesday, February 6, Gov. Shapiro delivered his second budget address, announcing his \$48.3 billion fiscal proposal for FY 2024-2025 in a joint session of the House and Senate. Much of the proposal prioritizes a range of policies and initiatives that Gov. Shapiro focused on throughout his first year in office, including an increased investment in basic K-12 education, higher education and economic development.

Another key theme in the budget proposal is one of the top 2024 county government priorities, increased funding for county-based mental health services. Notably, Gov. Shapiro's proposal includes another \$20 million increase in county mental health base funding for FY 2024-2025, with additional funds in successive years, reaching a \$60 million increase in FY 2025-2026. Counties are deeply disappointed in this proposed increase, as it fails to address the significant system-wide need counties have long dealt with. Because of this increasing need, counties requested an increase of \$250 million over the current county mental health base line to be directed entirely toward the base funds, regardless of investments being made in other mental health services such as school-based services. The minimal increase for county mental health services fails to provide a long-term commitment to appropriately rebuild the crumbling mental health system and shore up the social services safety net, providing a comprehensive system that is accessible for all Pennsylvanians.

Further, Gov. Shapiro is prioritizing mental health services in schools, proposing a sustained annual investment of \$100 million to continue provision of mental health grants to schools. Counties continue to call for increased coordination between counties and schools to ensure the system of care is built and supports children and families inside and outside of the classroom with available community-based services.

Overall for counties, this budget proposal reflects a failure to deliver support for a number of **2024 county priorities**. However, as this is the first of several steps in the commonwealth's annual budget proceedings, counties look forward to continuing discussions with the administration and General Assembly on the FY 2024-2025 budget, to ensure counties are positioned to serve the same constituents adequately and responsibly as our governmental partners – the residents of this commonwealth.

More information on the priorities can be found on [CCAP's Priorities webpage](#). CCAP has also assembled a number of budget resources, including an analysis of the budget, on its [Budget News webpage](#).

LATEST COUNTY CONNECTIONS EPISODE HIGHLIGHTS COUNTY PRIORITIES

County Connections, CCAP's 30-minute television program, aims to educate viewers about county government's role in the everyday lives of their residents, particularly around counties' priority issues. The **most recent episode** spotlights Northampton County commissioner Lori Vargo Heffner discussing the need for increased funding for mental health services and addressing the behavioral health needs of inmates in county jails. The show also features Clinton County commissioner on the importance of finding solutions to the juvenile detention capacity crisis, and CCAP President and Berks County commissioner Michael Rivera emphasizing the counties' role in selecting the priorities each year.

This episode aired on PCN on Sunday, February 4. Check out this episode and prior County Connections segments on the [CCAP Media YouTube Channel](#).

NEW TEN-YEAR STATE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY RELEASED

For the first time in almost two decades, Pennsylvania has created a **Statewide Economic Development Strategy**. Developed to guide economic growth, Gov. Shapiro’s plan outlines his vision for increased coordination between businesses, public agencies, universities and Pennsylvania workforce.

The plan focuses on five primary industry sectors—agriculture, energy, robotics and technology, life sciences, and manufacturing—with success measured through key objectives such as investment, efficiency, inclusion, innovation, and resiliency.

This plan highlights and builds off several initiatives Gov. Shapiro has championed in the first year of his administration, including speeding up the permitting process and investing in economic development and workforce programs. Additionally, his FY 2024-2025 budget proposal recommends further investments and resources to work toward implementation of this statewide strategy.

More information on the Pennsylvania Statewide Economic Development Strategy can be found on the PA Gets It Done [website](#).

GOVERNOR ANNOUNCES HIGHER EDUCATION PLAN

In late January, the Governor **proposed** unification of the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education universities (PASSHE) and the state’s community colleges under a new governance system to better invest and create a holistic higher education system in the commonwealth. The plan also proposes to incentivize all Pennsylvania colleges and universities to improve graduation rates and enrollment for in-demand careers through performance-based funding. In addition, Gov. Shapiro’s plan directs attention to the affordability of higher education, calling for a cap of \$1,000 in tuition and fees per semester at all state-owned universities and community colleges for Pennsylvanians students making up to the median income. To support this plan, the Governor in his FY 2024-2025 budget has also proposed a 15% increase in state funding to the new system, while dedicating 5% increases to the state-related universities (Penn State, Temple, Lincoln and Pitt).

Details regarding the impact to local authority and local funding for community colleges remain unknown at this time, and are anticipated to be addressed as part of any further discussions between the legislature and Gov. Shapiro.

CYBERSECURITY FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENTS SUBJECT OF SENATE HEARING

On January 31, the Senate Local Government Committee and Communications and Technology Committee held a joint public hearing on cybersecurity for local governments. With the evolving world of technology and way people do business and government administration, cybersecurity is becoming increasingly more important to protect data and personal information.

During the hearing, counties, along with other local governments, cited concerns regarding cybersecurity threats and a need for resources to aid in incident mitigation. Joe Sassano, executive director of IT and chief information officer for York County, provided **testimony** on behalf of counties, emphasizing that cybersecurity is a priority issue for counties in their daily operations. Specifically, counties are working across departments to continuously assess their digital hygiene, educate staff and implement cybersecurity best practices.

The need for funding and resources to help prevent cyberattacks on local governments was a pervasive theme throughout the hearing. CCAP, counties, other local government organizations, and their state and federal partners are already working together closely in the face of rising cybersecurity threats to improve security definitions and implement vital cybersecurity initiatives. While those partnerships are critical, cybersecurity mitigation is expensive and a major cost driver in county technology budgets.

To this end, counties are calling for new, ongoing state funding that would enable them to continue to address and adapt to cybersecurity protocols and best practices. Currently, the only funding available is through the State and Local Cybersecurity Grant Program, a one-time program funded out of the federal Infrastructure, Investment and Jobs Act that must stretch across all local government entities and schools. Gov. Shapiro did not include any proposals for dedicated state funding to assist local government entities with cybersecurity efforts in his FY 2024-2025 budget proposal.

Counties look forward to continuing discussions with state partners on digital hygiene best practices and meaningful investments in cybersecurity to ensure information is protected and government services can be provided safely, securely and uninterrupted.

CCAP SPRING CONFERENCE & VOTING MATTERS

CCAP members will have the opportunity to participate in the election of the two CCAP representatives to the NACo Board of Directors during Monday's opening general session of the **CCAP Spring Conference**, March 3-5 at the Hilton Harrisburg. The **conference agenda** will include remarks from Governor Josh Shapiro during the conference luncheon on Monday, a stand-alone workshop from the Academy for Excellence in County Government on Sunday, and dynamic breakout sessions with a diverse range of topics on Monday and Tuesday. Additionally, CCAP policy committee meetings will be held in person on Sunday afternoon, March 3, from 1 – 5 p.m. All CCAP members are welcome to attend and engage in any meetings and discussions, but only committee members may vote. **Conference registration** is now open through Friday, February 23.

Other CCAP Publications

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