



2024 County Priorities End of Year Status Update

CCAP members identified a total of eight priority issues for 2024. Grassroots activity on the priorities began following their adoption at the 2023 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 final half of the 2023-2024 Legislative Session.

911 Funding and Reauthorization

The General Assembly and the Governor enacted Act 147 of 2024, addressing critical statutory updates to support the implementation of Next Generation 911 (NG911). This act introduces significant changes to Pennsylvania's 911 statute, laying the groundwork for modernizing the system. This legislation represents a landmark achievement for CCAP, fulfilling the 2024 priority of advancing the NG911 technology. By addressing critical statutory needs, Act 147 empowers counties to provide a more efficient, reliable, and technologically advanced 911 system, enhancing public safety.

Beginning on March 1, 2024, the 911 surcharge was increased from \$1.65 to \$1.95 through the enactment of Act 34 of 2023. This increase is estimated to generate an additional \$50 million in revenue for county 911 services. This surcharge, however, is set to expire on January 31, 2026. While the statute itself will not lapse, counties have begun advocacy efforts for the reauthorization of the surcharge and are evaluating what increase to the surcharge is needed, which counties will pursue in tandem with other statutory updates through our collective advocacy efforts. Addressing this critical issue now is essential to prevent it from becoming a last-minute concern as the sunset approaches.

In addition, the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee, Local Government Commission, and Joint State Government Commission were directed to complete a comprehensive study by the end of 2024 to evaluate system efficiencies, costs, 911 interoperability, and other provisions. This report will provide counties and the legislature with valuable insights into the funding and operational needs of the 911 system.

Counties are proactively preparing for 2025, equipping members to engage legislators early in discussions on funding and reauthorization. Counties remain focused on advocating for statutory updates necessary to ensure that the system continues to align with evolving system needs.

County Mental Health Funding Increase

Counties received \$20 million funding increases in the FY 2023-2024 and FY 2024-25 budget cycles, bringing the total additional investments over the two-year period to \$40 million. This additional funding has been utilized to address critical needs by creating new programs, expanding existing services, and supporting staff retention and recruitment.

In FY 2023-2024, counties allocated the \$20 million increase toward:

- Student Assistance programs in schools;
- Mobile psychiatric rehabilitation services;
- Certified peer specialist programs;
- Enhanced case management services; and
- Community housing programs.

The additional \$20 million in FY 2024-2025 continues to support investments in crisis and emergency response, services for justice-involved populations, supportive housing initiatives, prevention programs for adolescents, community-based services, and workforce stabilization efforts for both counties and providers.

Counties led the charge in advocating for a much-needed increase in mental health funding, achieving significant progress through multiple media and advocacy events. Through partnering with key associations and organizations and engaging county human services professionals, counties amplified the urgency of this priority. These efforts underscored the critical need for funding increases and demonstrated a united approach to advancing mental health services. Furthermore, counties delivered testimony emphasizing their integral role in Pennsylvania's community-based mental health system and the pressing need to enhance service coordination. This testimony emphasized the necessity of addressing systematic barriers to ensure comprehensive support, enabling the mental health system to more effectively serve Pennsylvanians.

In addition, counties remain active participants of the Behavioral Health Council, which was established by Governor Shapiro through an [Executive Order](#) issued on October 10, 2023.

Despite the roughly 6% funding increase, it falls short of addressing the significant funding shortfall resulting from 15 years of continued disinvestment. Counties estimate that inflation, increased demand, and stagnant funding levels have left an unmet need of more than \$1.2 billion – an amount that continues to grow as service demands rise.

Addressing Inmates with Mental Health Issues

County jails have become de-facto state hospitals following years of deinstitutionalization of individuals with mental illness. When unmet behavioral health challenges lead to criminal charges, individuals are often committed to jails that are not equipped to address needs of people who need mental health treatment, resulting in poor outcomes for those individuals and for their communities. Counties have continued to move the ball on discussions with the Shapiro Administration and legislature on alternatives to placing inmates who have mental illness in jails.

Increasing the Prevailing Wage Threshold

CCAP advocated for updates to the outdated prevailing wage act, which has not been adjusted since the 1960s. The current threshold now encompasses nearly all public construction projects in counties, creating significant challenges. Counties engaged in conversations with the General Assembly and the Administration on raising the threshold to align with current inflation levels as this adjustment would allow public funds to be used more efficiently, maximizing their impact to better serve communities across Pennsylvania.

CCAP actively monitored and supported legislation aimed at addressing the outdated prevailing wage threshold and encouraged the state to take a more proactive role in resolving this issue. Further, CCAP fostered strategic partnerships with external stakeholders committed to advocating for reforms to the prevailing wage threshold. As the prevailing wage threshold remains a significant challenge for counties and other local governments, counties continue to engage in ongoing discussions with the General Assembly and the Administration to seek meaningful solutions.

Right-to-Know Law Reform

Counties advocated for reforms to the Right-to-Know (RTK) Law within both the Administration and the General Assembly. The volume of RTK requests received by counties have grown significantly, straining county resources and increasing workloads particularly due to repeat requestors and requests for large amounts of information. While counties fully support transparency, they emphasize the need to update the law to address the challenges posed by vexatious and commercial requesters. These updates are essential to ensure the law continues to provide transparency while balancing the original intent of promoting government accountability.

Counties have collaborated directly with the legislature to draft and advocate for Right-to-Know reforms, making progress on this important issue. As counties continue to face the demands of growing RTK requests, CCAP remains committed to ongoing discussions with the General Assembly and the Administration to advance meaningful updates to the law.

Vote-by-Mail Reforms

CCAP continues to advocate for resolving administrative issues and gaps within the Election Code. While there was no substantial movement on legislation that would amend Act 77, CCAP has continued to monitor and offer comments on Election Code bills that could affect how counties conduct their election administration duties.

CCAP issued formal communications regarding Act 77, emphasizing the importance of collaboration with counties to address necessary updates. As changes to Act 77 and the Election Code are considered, it is imperative that the General Assembly ensures these updates provide election officials with the resources necessary to address the complexities of an evolving electoral landscape.

Counties also provided formal comments and testimony on key aspects of the election code, including ballot security, open primaries, and pre-canvassing. Pre-canvassing remains a top priority for counties, with formal comments submitted in support of legislation allowing the processing of mail-in ballots prior to election day. Counties further provided input on the proposed expansion of open primaries, raising concerns about the clarity of the legislation and the need for adequate time for implementation, particularly with the upcoming presidential election – a complex and large-scale event requiring significant preparation.

Additionally, Union County Commissioner and chair of the CCAP Election Reform Committee, Jeff Refer, testified on the administration of absentee and mail-in ballots, detailing the robust measures counties employ to ensure elections are conducted safely, securely, and with accuracy.

Counties remain committed to collaborating with the Administration and the General Assembly to develop and refine election-related legislation that supports efficient and transparent electoral processes.

Broadband Access and Development

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. The CCAP Board extended the Broadband Task Force to continue 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 several times during the year to discuss and provide feedback on the work of the Pennsylvania Broadband Development Authority (PBDA). CCAP staff continued to work closely with the PBDA Data and Mapping subcommittee, ensuring that county feedback and perspectives were included in state plans and mapping work.

CCAP, with the input and advice of the task force, provided comments on the state broadband plan, action steps, and grant and funding application criteria. Counties also provided critical input on the local government feedback processes for grant applications, which allowed for counties and other local governments to offer insight into proposed infrastructure projects. Maintaining these touchpoints and feedback processes will be critical in determining how much of the more than \$1.6 billion in federal funding from the BEAD program and other digital equity programs will actualize for Pennsylvania.

CCAP conferences featured 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.

Juvenile Detention Capacity Crisis

CCAP continued to advocate for solutions to address the juvenile detention capacity crisis across Pennsylvania. The closure of juvenile justice facilities throughout the commonwealth has created significant challenges, including the placement of youth in inappropriate shelters. Pennsylvania

lacks secure treatment beds for youth with complex behavioral needs, resulting in counties contracting for secure detention beds or sending youth to out-of-state facilities.

CCAP has worked closely with the state, as well as local and community providers, to broaden community-based treatment programs. Counties further advocated for reforms to create secure treatment options for youth with complex needs and ensure adequate capacity for the secure detention of juvenile offenders.