**NEWS RELEASE**

**[DATE]**

**CONTACT**:

[NAME], [Title]

[PHONE #], [EMAIL]

**\_\_\_\_\_\_ County Commissioners Request Appropriate Funding to
Support the Crumbling Mental Health System in Pennsylvania**

([Your town], Pa.) – The \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ County Commissioners voted today for a Resolution which requests appropriate funding to support community-based mental health services in the FY 2022-2023 Commonwealth of Pennsylvania budget currently under negotiation by the state legislature, Governor and administration. \_\_\_\_\_ County is just one in a series of local governments and community organizations in Pennsylvania to author and approve such a measure as part of a larger call to address the crumbling mental health system.

In 2012, the approved state budget for the commonwealth for human services and mental health program funding was cut by 10% or roughly $84 million dollars, forcing programs to close and putting the human services system into a vulnerable state. Over the past two years, the COVID-19 pandemic has made worse what was an already tenuous situation with mental health services in Pennsylvania. Now, in 2022, the County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania (CCAP) and many other community stakeholders are calling on the leaders in Harrisburg to increase mental health funding and provide an ongoing funding commitment for years to come to not only fill the gaps in service need, but to also ensure counties are able to develop and sustain programs to fit the needs of their communities.

There have been numerous studies and professional surveys that have shown increases in suicide, issues with substance and alcohol use, and treatment for anxiety and depression as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Counties were already seeing the system be stretched dangerously thin before the pandemic and now demand for services is at an all-time high. At the same time, human services providers around the state have sounded the alarm on the growing staffing crisis, which subsequently generates even longer wait lists and reduced services overall. The lack of sustainable funding is leading to further impacts in our communities, including increased wait times in emergency departments, increased mental health needs in our schools and increased calls to law enforcement for mental health related response.

Commissioner [name] expressed serious concern over the situation stating, “Our system collectively has been stretched to the breaking point. To prevent further suffering and invest in the recovery from the pandemic, we’re asking the Governor and legislature to make an investment in human services now.”

Commissioner [name] added, “A substantial investment of state dollars is needed to rebuild and strengthen community crisis services, residential mental health programs and other locally-provided care that will stabilize mental health services and assist hospitals, other community resources, and our county jails with becoming de facto safety nets when traditional access channels are pushed beyond capacity.”

The resolution was passed unanimously by the [Board of Commissioners] and will be circulated state legislators, the Governor’s office, and various media outlets. The Commissioners urge all citizens to contact their local legislators and the Governor’s office to ask for leadership on investing in mental health in the commonwealth.

“We need state leadership to step up on mental health funding and services in Pennsylvania,” stated Commissioner [name], “Now, more than ever. We’re in a real crisis.”

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