Through a process of discussion and deliberation, the counties of Pennsylvania have come together to select the legislative priority issues we feel deserve the most focus in 2022. \_\_\_\_\_ County was active in these discussions, and we support the seven legislative priorities that were chosen because of the direct impact they have on our county residents.

Our 2022 priorities include:

* Appropriate funding for the crumbling mental health system
* The Human Services workforce crisis
* Broadband expansion
* Funding and reform for children and youth services
* 911 funding and reauthorization
* Promoting election integrity
* Election funding and resources

The well-being of our constituents and our communities is paramount. Therefore, securing the appropriate funding to support the mental health system is at the top of the priority list. The commonwealth must effectively collaborate with its county partners to fully support the needs of our most vulnerable citizens who are affected by mental health issues, especially in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

As our top priority, counties are advocating a substantial investment in mental health services 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 with capacity concerns.

Along similar lines, the human services workforce crisis is another priority counties will address. While all industries are suffering workforce shortages, human services are unique, as they rely entirely on people to deliver those services. These roles cannot be performed by computers or other machines. In \_\_\_ County, this includes \_\_\_\_\_. (one or two examples of successful/notable human service/community based mental health programs you offer).

Without our human services employees, we are unable to investigate child abuse, help someone find housing, or provide mental health supports and substance abuse treatment. To address this crisis, counties support the development of programs and partnerships to streamline human services recruitment efforts and create county employment pipelines.

As workforce solutions continue to evolve, access to technology, specifically broadband internet, must follow. The COVID-19 pandemic has further spotlighted the fact that the collective future of Pennsylvanians hinges on addressing the challenges to broadband expansion that prevent access to opportunities and information to many of our county residents.

With the promise of billions of dollars in federal investment under the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act and the development of the statewide Pennsylvania Broadband Development Authority, we must work together with federal, state, local and private stakeholders to develop strategies for successful broadband expansion that maximizes resources and minimizes overbuild.

Counties also have the critical responsibility of assuring child welfare in the commonwealth through investigating allegations of child abuse and providing other services to the children and families in their communities. To achieve this, counties will work to achieve the appropriate funding and reform for the Children and Youth System.

By securing adequate funding from the state, we can hire the necessary caseworkers to address increasing caseloads.

Funding will also be crucial to 911 response services. Counties are proud to provide this key function in public safety, but as technologies continue to evolve and funding streams become out of line with current realities, counties need reliable funding to meet the growing demands of our residents and visitors.

Rounding out our 2022 priorities are two issues relating to elections in Pennsylvania: adequate funding and the promotion of election integrity.

The implementation of mail-in ballots for Pennsylvanians was a significant change to election administration, causing a significant increase to county budgets for elections-related costs in 2020 and 2021. To properly administer the elections, counties need additional resources to address workload requirements, which were further compounded by the significant loss of election directors and staff due to the stress of the job during a pandemic and highly contentious presidential election.

 \_\_\_\_\_ County takes pride in its responsibility to ensure the fair, efficient and accurate administration of Pennsylvania’s elections. Overall, counties must have clear rules to help restore the public’s confidence in the integrity of our elections and must be at the table with the General Assembly and administration to help develop solutions.

At the end of the day, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ County cannot solve these issues alone. In fact, all 67 counties cannot achieve these priorities on their own either. But every county in the commonwealth will unite to push for a productive partnership between county and state government. We seek to re-engage the General Assembly and the administration in understanding and respecting the state-county partnership from both a financial and regulatory perspective to help better serve those who elected us. We take these priorities seriously, and we are committed to working together to achieve them.