



Cumberland County Board of Commissioners

Gary Eichelberger, Chairman . Jean Foschi, Vice Chairman . Vincent T. DiFilippo, Secretary

Press Release

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Cumberland County Commissioners Request Appropriate Funding to Support the Crumbling Mental Health System in Pennsylvania

Carlisle, PA – Cumberland County Commissioners today voted by resolution to request 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.

Cumberland County is just one of several local governments and community organizations to approve this 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, putting the human services system into a vulnerable state.

“Our system collectively has been stretched to the breaking point,” said Commissioner Gary Eichelberger. “We’re asking the Governor and legislature to make an investment in human services now and urge all citizens to contact their local legislators, and the governor’s office work together and invest in mental health services for the commonwealth.”

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.

State funding has lagged far behind needs and caseloads in the county for years, negatively affecting services, causing the county a projected deficit of \$333,945 this year. Cumberland County has seen an 85.7% increase in suicide deaths from 2019 to 2021, with an 80% increase in 302 petitions over that same period.

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.

“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,” said Commissioner Jean Foschi.

The resolution passed unanimously by the Cumberland County Board of Commissioners and has been distributed to state legislators and the governor’s office.

“We need state government to step up and provide adequate funding for mental health services in Pennsylvania, said Commissioner Vince DiFilippo. “COVID has created many issues for our citizens but an increasing number of folks suffering from mental health issues is a very high priority and needs to be addressed now, more than ever.”

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