



House of Representatives
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
HARRISBURG

December 16, 2019

Governor Tom Wolf
225 Main Capitol Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Dear Governor Wolf,

For more than 20 years, behavioral health funding has faced a pattern of chronic underfunding. In the state's fiscal budget year 2012/13, mental health funding was cut by ten percent. There had not been an increase in this budget line item since 2009.

The ten percent funding cut led to some counties reallocating mental health funding to other health and human service programs and hindered the delivery of quality community based mental health services. Moreover, the ten percent funding cut and reallocation of county mental health funds destabilized people's chances of recovery. Providers of these services can't provide for the mental health needs of Pennsylvanians with 2009 dollars.

The results of the 2012/13 mental health budget cuts led to:

- A reduction or elimination of mental health employment, education and/or training programs;
- Reductions to community housing and residential programs;
- A reduction in funding for psychiatric rehabilitation services;
- Funding cuts or an elimination of drop-in centers, clubhouses, and warm lines; and
- An exacerbation of the health and human service workforce crisis at all levels. Providers continue to have issues recruiting/retaining health and human service professionals and critically needed front-line staff.

The ten percent mental health funding cuts continue to plague the Commonwealth's mental health system and undercuts your goal to serve Pennsylvania's vulnerable populations. Through your leadership, your Administration and the General Assembly have identified and positioned the Commonwealth as:

- An Employment First state;
- A "non-institution state" - increasing community housing as opposed to homelessness or more restrictive and expensive care.

In the upcoming 2020/21 fiscal year, we believe there will be strong support to increase mental health funding, if you propose it. There is strong and growing support among county commissioners to make this issue a CCAP priority. Additionally, mental health providers are at the breaking point and so they are already speaking with their county commissioners and legislators regarding this critical need.

Pennsylvania cannot afford to wait for a tragedy or crisis to occur. The Commonwealth must sufficiently fund mental health services for its citizens. Mental health providers are simply unable to provide the mental health services Pennsylvanians need in 2019 with 2009 dollars. Our children, families, and communities deserve quality mental health services so they can maintain their mental health and work towards wellness, in every way.

We respectfully urge you to increase mental health funding to restore the ten percent cut with a 5% increase in your proposed 2020/21 budget and a commitment of another 5% increase in mental health funding in your proposed 2021/22 budget.

Sincerely,

The Mental Health Caucus



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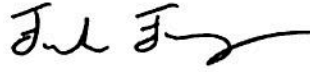
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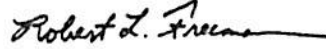
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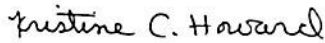
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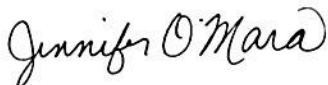
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