TO: Members of the House State Government Committee

FROM: Lisa Schaefer, Executive Director

DATE: January 28, 2021

RE: **CCAP Comments on SURE System**

On behalf of the County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania, representing all 67 counties in the commonwealth, thank you for this opportunity to submit our comments on the SURE system and other election information technology.

Over the past several years, we have heard from our counties about their frustrations with the existing SURE system – its propensity to crash, and when it did run, its incredible slowness in being able to process applications and other tasks. This leads to an already increased workload taking even longer and adding to the resource and workload stressors counties experience. While many of these stem from underlying structural issues, part of the challenge is that SURE was not designed to handle the volume of mail-in ballots (both absentee and mail-in ballots), nor was it built around the county work flows needed to handle the volume of mail-in ballots, that we saw last year and will likely see again in years ahead.

The Department of State (DOS) has been planning a modernization of the SURE system, and we were encouraged last week to receive notice that a vendor has been selected to develop the SURE replacement. We are also encouraged that DOS has indicated its intention to involve counties in a meaningful way through work groups in the development of the new system. This partnership will be critical – DOS and the vendor must understand county work flows to design a system that makes their processes as efficient as possible, as counties are the ones who spend the time working in the system day in and day out.

In addition, DOS and the vendor must work with our county IT leaders to create a system that is usable and can be maintained in a secure manner. We have had successful partnerships with the commonwealth and DOS on projects such as the funding and implementation of Albert sensors to help provide election cyber security, and Cofense cyber security awareness training for staff. These partnerships must be continued and expanded, as it is mutually beneficial to have these relationships in place.

To that end, we also need the General Assembly and the administration to work together to appropriate the necessary financial resources to fully and properly stand up this infrastructure, and to continue to assure the resources are available to maintain the system going forward.

Without these critical investments, counties' diligent year-round efforts to administer efficient and secure elections will be hamstrung in the absence of a robust and stable IT infrastructure that anticipates future needs and supports the work on the backend.

Again, thank you for this opportunity to assure that the county voice is heard on this important topic.