

LEGISLATIVE BULLETIN

COUNTY COMMISSIONERS ASSOCIATION OF PENNSYLVANIA THE VOICE OF PENNSYLVANIA COUNTIES



COUNTY PRIORITIES SPOTLIGHT: COUNTIES ANNOUNCE 2024 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

County leaders have announced their eight **legislative priorities** for 2024, each of which highlights counties' commitment to core county responsibilities and to working in partnership with the state to deliver critical services to the people and communities of Pennsylvania.

Counties' top priority is 911 funding and reauthorization, and they are actively working with PEMA, legislative committees, emergency management professionals, the communications industry and other interests on improvements to the 911 system. While Act 34 of 2023 provided a nominal funding increase to counties, at a surcharge of just \$1.95, counties, and ultimately county taxpayers, are still shouldering 25-30% of the cost of the 911 system. Investments in 911 promise a strong, connected 911 system, which will assure availability and reliability and can keep up with the pace of ever-changing technological advances to maximize emergency services delivery. With just two years until the next reauthorization, Pennsylvania counties urge the General Assembly and the Governor to begin having real conversations about proper 911 funding immediately, so this life-saving service does not become a perpetual backburner issue.

Counties have prioritized two key areas related to the demand for increased mental health resources and relief: first, an increase in base funding for county mental health, and second, addressing the mental health needs of inmates. While both of these priorities feature different asks in terms of addressing the issues, both underscore the need for additional funding for mental health at the community level, which can aid in prevention and upfront service delivery meeting people where they are before any behavioral health issues become more severe and produce more serious and costly outcomes.

Other county priorities include addressing the juvenile detention capacity crisis, broadband access and development, increasing the prevailing wage threshold,

Right-to-Know reforms and vote-by-mail reforms. Additional information on each of these priorities is available on CCAP's [website](#) including a brochure highlighting each priority and sample resources for counties.

2024 CCAP PRESIDENT HIGHLIGHTS IMPORTANCE OF STATE-COUNTY PARTNERSHIP

As a county commissioner I have learned so much about the crucial services counties offer our communities and how they collaborate collectively to serve and support the needs of our residents. During my presidency, I am eager to carry on that thread of the collective voice through the mission and vision of CCAP. As the recognized leader for Pennsylvania county government, CCAP is the unifying voice of all Pennsylvania counties, providing leadership and support for excellence in county government.

Pennsylvania counties have a nearly 240-year history of partnership with the commonwealth in a wide variety of areas, including public safety, elections, human services, property and taxation, transportation, and many others. As the state and counties continue to face a wide variety of challenges and opportunities – both fiscal and programmatic – the county voice and county experience can be extremely valuable as policy is made in Harrisburg, but only if it is early enough to appreciate the details and how they fit into the big picture of service delivery. Counties cannot do it all alone and we look forward to continuing to build on the many positive relationships with various governors, administrations, agencies, and General Assemblies we have had.

As we begin 2024, my hope is to carry on and strengthen the trend of intergovernmental partnership, ensuring counties are brought to the table during decision-making processes when seeking to change aspects of the state-county partnership. Counties stand at the ready to continue discussions with the legislature and Governor on all issues important to counties, identifying ways to continue building the state-county partnership in these areas of critical service provision.

Sincerely,

Michael Rivera, Berks County Commissioner, 2024 CCAP President.

HOUSE HEARINGS FOCUS ON STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH

On January 17 and 18, the House Education Committee hosted informational meetings on student mental health funding and services. An array of medical, educational, and industry specialists testified on the need for increased mental health supports for youth. These specialists cited poor scholastic performance and ever-increasing behavioral health issues—from anxiety and stress to crisis and suicide—as the results of an underfunded and understaffed youth mental health system.

While there was general agreement on the need for increased services, a more dynamic conversation was had on improving programming and funding to expand treatments and services, both inside and outside of schools. In addition to counties, testifiers, including representatives from the Pennsylvania School Boards Association (PSBA) and the Rehabilitation and Community Providers Association (RCPA), emphasized the importance of a holistic approach to mental health system investment. They stressed the need to ensure universal access to mental health services, programs, and treatment regardless of age, school district, county of residence or other factors. CCAP's [testimony](#) focused on the fundamental necessity of cooperation between schools and counties, that one element cannot be funded at the expense of the other. Both counties and schools need more flexible funding sources to create customized programming based on the priorities in each

individual county.

Counties are asking for \$250 million increase in mental health base funds for FY 2024-2025, separate from any other investments being made directly to school-based or other mental health services. In addition to this funding, it is CCAP's goal that schools and counties form a more holistic approach to treating mental illness in youth. The prevention of a bifurcated system reduces duplication of programming and competition for staff while increasing student access to treatment through county referrals and affirming counties' comprehensive response to need.

STATE LAUNCHES NEW ONLINE ESSENTIAL SERVICES RESOURCE

The Shapiro Administration recently **announced** a new tool connecting individuals to essential services offered by organizations, agencies, and healthcare providers. **PA Navigate** is an online resource that assists Pennsylvanians in identifying local providers of food, shelter, childcare, and more. PA Navigate empowers users to self-refer for services while fostering a stronger connection between agencies, counties, organizations, and providers. This fusion of myriad resources takes Pennsylvanians another step closer to whole person care.

CONTINUING RESOLUTION KEEPS FEDERAL GOVERNMENT OPEN THROUGH MARCH 2024

On January 18, Congress **passed** their third stop-gap measure to keep federal government agencies open through March 2024, funding agencies at their current level while giving lawmakers additional time to develop full-year federal appropriations bills for FY 2024, which began on October 1. Similar to the Continuing Resolution passed in November, the spending measure is laddered and funds four federal agencies through March 1 and the remainder through March 8. Counties urge the resolution of budget negotiations for the new fiscal year as alternatives to a completed budget, including continuing resolutions and government shutdowns, create costly delays and uncertainty in providing federal assistance, funding and programs to counties and our residents.

More information on the Continuing Resolution can be found on the National Association of Counties (NACo) [website](#).

GOVERNOR TO PROVIDE FY 2024-2025 BUDGET ADDRESS, BUDGET HEARINGS TO FOLLOW

The House and Senate will convene in joint session Tuesday, February 6, to hear the annual budget address which will preview Governor Shapiro's proposed FY 2024-2025 budget. The Governor is scheduled to deliver his address around noon in the Capitol Rotunda. It is typically broadcast live on the Pennsylvania Cable Network, as well as through streaming video on a variety of legislative websites. Following the address, CCAP will analyze the proposed funding levels and provide information to counties on the proposal.

After the address, the House and Senate Appropriations committees will be holding hearings on the Governor's FY 2024-2025 commonwealth budget beginning the week of February 20 through early March. The House will begin their hearings with the Department of Community and Economic Development, followed by the Department of Revenue and Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency while the Senate will begin with the Independent Fiscal Office and Department of Corrections and Pennsylvania Parole Board.

More information, including a budget analysis for counties and the complete budget hearing schedule, can be found on CCAP's Budget News [webpage](#).

CCAP SPRING CONFERENCE & VOTING MATTERS

CCAP members will have the opportunity to participate in the election of the two CCAP representatives to the NACo Board of Directors during Monday's opening general session of the [CCAP Spring Conference](#), March 3-5 at the Hilton Harrisburg. The [conference agenda](#) will include remarks from Governor Josh Shapiro during the conference luncheon on Monday, a stand-alone workshop from the Academy for Excellence in County Government on Sunday, and dynamic breakout sessions with a diverse range of topics on Monday and Tuesday. Additionally, CCAP Policy Committee Meetings will be held in person on Sunday afternoon, March 3, from 1 – 5 p.m. All CCAP members are welcome to attend and engage in any meetings and discussions, but only committee members may vote. [Conference registration](#) is now open through Friday, February 23.

[Other CCAP Publications](#)

CCAP | PO Box 60769, Harrisburg, PA 17106-0769

[Unsubscribe cloudsub@pacounties.org](mailto:cloudsub@pacounties.org)

[Update Profile](#) | [Constant Contact Data Notice](#)

Sent by ccap@pacounties.org powered by



Try email marketing for free today!