



December 11, 2023

The Honorable Josh Shapiro
Office of the Governor

The Honorable Kim L. Ward
Pennsylvania State Senate



The Honorable Joe Pittman
Pennsylvania State Senate

The Honorable Jay Costa
Pennsylvania State Senate



The Honorable Joanna McClinton
Pennsylvania House of Representatives

The Honorable Matthew D. Bradford
Pennsylvania House of Representatives



The Honorable Bryan Cutler
Pennsylvania House of Representatives



Dear Governor Shapiro and Leaders of the General Assembly:

The undersigned organizations, which are part of a collaborative group known as the Pennsylvania Provider Advocacy Coalition, are writing to express our profound concern about the status of mental health services in the commonwealth.

The Mental Health Safety Net Coalition

We are requesting your help as the leaders of our commonwealth to ensure that the final fiscal year (FY) 2023–2024 budget package includes new investments in adult, child/adolescent, and county mental health services and that these funds be deployed in the field as soon as possible. The mental health system is struggling to meet rising demand for services and unable to sustain the increased cost of delivering those services.



The signs of this crisis are all around us, including increases in suicides, boarding in emergency departments, increasing wait times for mental health services, and rising incarceration rates for those suffering from mental illnesses. The increased demand for mental health services is meeting the reality of years of inadequate funding. Counties can no longer compensate for the lack of state funds and providers can no longer maintain programs in the face of mental health professional shortages and double digit increases in staff costs. The loss of coverage associated with the Medicaid redetermination process will only increase the pressure on this already fragile system.



Pennsylvania Academy
of Ophthalmology

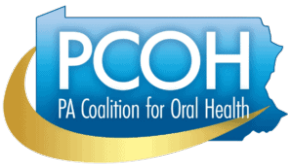


The Eye Physicians and Surgeons



Pennsylvania Chapter

INCORPORATED IN PENNSYLVANIA



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The mental health system all too often is unable to deliver the right care, at the right time and in the right setting. We recognize that there is no simple fix and that a sustained, multiyear effort by all stakeholders—the commonwealth, counties, providers, insurers, and advocates—is necessary to rebuild and create a mental health system for the 21st century.

We believe the new mental health funding in the FY 2023–2024 budget will help to stabilize the system while work is done on a longer-term plan to guide future investments. In this context we believe it is critically important to address the defunding of adult mental health services.

As you know, the General Appropriations Act takes the \$100 million in one-time federal funds appropriated last year for adult mental health services and reappropriates these same funds again only this time for children’s mental health services in schools. The House has proposed one way to fix this problem, and we urge all parties to work together to ensure that \$100 million in funding for adult mental health services is included, along with the \$100 million increase for child/adolescent mental health services and the \$20 million increase in county mental health services, in the final resolution of the FY 2023–2024 budget process.

Equally important, we urge the administration and General Assembly to develop an agreed upon process that results in an overall plan to help guide necessary future investments in our mental health system. As you know, there are number of proposals for new mental health funding, and these expenditures cannot be viewed in isolation. Investments in creating a mental health system for the 21st century are likely to fail without a shared vision and agreement on core objectives. The newly created Behavioral Health Council would be a logical forum for this discussion, but only if the parties agree that it should be used for that purpose.

Again, we urge you to act quickly to deploy these critical resources to help respond to the mental health needs of children and adults in Pennsylvania. We stand ready to assist in any way in the critical effort to strengthen the commonwealth’s mental health system.

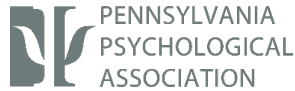
Sincerely,

Ambulance Association of Pennsylvania

American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists

Free Clinic Association of Pennsylvania

The Hospital and Healthsystem Association of Pennsylvania



[The Urban Health Care Coalition of Pennsylvania](#)

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LeadingAge PA

The Mental Health Safety Net Coalition

National Association of Social Workers, Pennsylvania Chapter

Pennsylvania Academy of Family Physicians

Pennsylvania Academy of Ophthalmology

Pennsylvania Athletic Trainers' Society

Pennsylvania Association of Community Health Centers

Pennsylvania Association of Home and Community Based Services Providers

Pennsylvania Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics

Pennsylvania Chapter of the American College of Physicians

Pennsylvania Coalition of Nurse Practitioners

Pennsylvania Coalition for Oral Health

Pennsylvania College of Emergency Physicians

Pennsylvania Dental Association

Pennsylvania Medical Society

Pennsylvania Optometric Association

Pennsylvania Psychological Association

Pennsylvania Rheumatology Society

Pennsylvania Rural Health Association

Pennsylvania Society of Health-System Pharmacists

Pennsylvania Society of Physician Assistants

Rehabilitation and Community Providers Association

The Urban Health Care Coalition of Pennsylvania