

For Immediate Release

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Pennsylvania's counties support block grants
Administration and counties working together on new way of doing business

(Harrisburg, PA) — In a joint media event today with Lieutenant Governor Jim Cawley and Department of Public Welfare (DPW) Secretary Gary Alexander, Pennsylvania's counties announced they have reached substantial agreement with the Corbett Administration on a block grant proposal to enhance flexibility, efficiency, cost-effectiveness and responsiveness while improving the outcomes for clients and families in delivering critical core human services throughout the commonwealth, according to officials with the County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania (CCAP).

“CCAP and its members believe that, in conjunction with our staff professionals and providers, and in consultation with our communities, we are the level of government best able to tailor service delivery to local need,” said CCAP president and Lebanon County commissioner Jo Ellen Litz. “Consistent with our number one priority for 2012 – human services system reform – CCAP supports the block granting of human services funding as a preferred administrative and delivery mechanism.”

According to Litz, the current system of categorical funding frequently prevents dollars from being used where they can be most effective or to provide integrated care across programs. The block grant proposal will collapse seven of these human services line items (mental health community base, intellectual disabilities community base, county child welfare special grants, homeless assistance program, Act 152 Drug and Alcohol, Behavioral Health Services, and the Human Services Development Fund) into a single funding stream and provide those dollars to counties in the form of a block grant. The proposal will also encourage new methods for local planning, enabling counties to provide a more holistic approach to services by allowing funds to moved where they are most needed in the local communities.

Counties Announce Support of Block Grant Agreement
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Litz noted that counties had identified a number of issues that needed to be resolved in a block grant proposal and have worked closely with the Department of Public Welfare, the Governor's Budget Office and the Legislature to ensure that those issues are addressed in a final proposal, which they anticipate will be on the Governor's desk prior to the summer recess. Specifically, the announcement includes agreement on the following points:

- Block grants will be phased in to allow counties to make administrative and programmatic changes to provide coordinated and integrated human services programs.
- Reporting will be streamlined, resulting in a substantial decrease in the volume of paperwork currently submitted by counties.
- Planning will be streamlined into a unified annual county plan to replace the numerous plans currently submitted by counties for each categorical.

Other regulatory reforms, funding and payment to counties, and the ability of counties to continue to operate existing joinder arrangements or create new joinders are also part of the agreement.

CCAP first vice president and Berks County commissioner Christian Leinbach commented, "Counties very much appreciate the willingness of the Governor, Lt Governor, the Budget Office and the Department of Public Welfare to engage in these very detailed discussions over the past weeks and months to ensure that we are emphasizing local decision-making in providing services, improved stewardship of taxpayer dollars, and above all, more effective human services programming for our local communities." He continued, "CCAP will continue to be an active partner in these discussions and will remain at the forefront in offering assistance through any resulting transitions to comprehensive local planning."

CCAP is the voice of county government, a statewide, nonprofit, nonpartisan association representing Pennsylvania's 67 counties.

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