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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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REVENUE MEASURE NEEDED NOW FOR STATE BUDGET

As the chief executive of an association of mental health, intellectual disability, and substance use disorder provider agencies, I have seen some dark financial times. The typical community provider agency is still reeling from deep program cuts received over the last decade. But this current economic crisis is different. It has left many community agencies on the brink of closing their doors. This is why we believe additional broad-based revenue generation mechanisms are needed in the Pennsylvania budget now more than ever before.

No one likes rising taxes, most of all the employee of a community provider agency. Low Medicaid reimbursements dictate low salaries, especially for those direct care workers that provide services for Pennsylvania's most vulnerable citizens. Salaries listed in the human services section of any newspaper employment section or online job bank are evidence to this fact. Additional taxes out of a paycheck that is already dangerously close to the poverty level are never welcome. But no one pursues a human services career in order to live a life of financial prosperity. They pursue that career to benefit those in need.

Community providers take their responsibilities as caregivers seriously. They accept lower wages to ensure that those receiving treatment and services can fully live their lives outside of institutions and in their communities. This is why we believe additional revenue is necessary for the state budget. If the current budget passes without additional funding, provider agencies will be left with no choice but to reduce and, in some cases, close needed programs.

This potential reality is complicated by the fact that for many of the people we serve, there is nowhere else to go. Providers cannot simply shut down residential programs and send those in

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service onto the streets. These individuals have basic needs that must be met, housing and treatment being first and foremost. Without additional funding, there will not be programs available to meet these required needs.

The long-term financial and social cost of closing other programs is just as intimidating. Without programs such as outpatient and partial hospitalization, those in need of services will have to resort to crisis treatment and emergency rooms, two expensive treatment options that are more fragmented and less reliable.

Even with revenue increases, I do not delude myself into thinking that this will solve all of Pennsylvania's problems. As our economy has declined and state revenues have shrunk, providers have received significant cuts throughout the past year. I anticipate when the upcoming state budget is finalized, we will see more funding cuts. But what I discuss now – finding additional revenue enhancements - means the difference between damage and extinction to community providers.

Just as providers take their responsibilities to those in their care seriously, lawmakers must also take the same responsibilities towards Pennsylvanians in need. A responsible state budget must be passed that establishes an adequate safety net for Pennsylvania's most vulnerable citizens by including broad-based revenue generation. Passing a measure like this takes courage and it is courage that we call for from our elected officials.

PCPA is a statewide trade association that promotes a community-based, responsive, and viable system of agencies providing quality services for individuals receiving mental health, intellectual disability, addictive disease, and other related human services. PCPA represents over 225 community-based agencies that provide mental health, intellectual and developmental disability, and substance use disorder services for children and adults. Members operate in all 67 Pennsylvania counties and serve more than one million Pennsylvanians per year.

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