The Pennsylvania Community Providers Association (PCPA) represents 200 community-based organizations that provide or support mental health, intellectual disability, substance abuse, children’s, and other human services. Members are in all 67 counties in the commonwealth, employ and provide benefits to 40,000, and serve over one million Pennsylvanians each year.

For over 200 years, the support and care for those with severe mental illnesses and intellectual disabilities has been a core responsibility of state government. In times of economic challenge, it is more important than ever that the state not abandon its responsibility to its vulnerable citizens. When families find themselves in need of services for their sons and daughters, will accessible quality community services be available? Or will Pennsylvania taxpayers have to assume the cost of overuse of state hospitals, state centers, emergency rooms, or what has become a default state institution – the correctional system?

Support Medicaid expansion in Pennsylvania to provide access to care and support services for mental illness and/or substance use disorders.

SUPPORT Medicaid expansion to bring in new treatment dollars and allow state dollars to be used for mental health services for people currently unable to access them. Many individuals with behavioral health needs often have no or very limited access to preventive, primary care, and wellness services. Entry into the mental health system at crisis through the emergency department and treatment through inpatient care is costly and inefficient. Early detection and treatment through community-based services is much more effective and demonstrates greatly improved outcomes. As a result, more people in recovery will be able to work and participate in the community.

Preserve funding for mental health, intellectual disability, substance use disorder, and autism services, and protect Pennsylvania’s safety net.

SUPPORT restoration of the 10 percent cut to community-based mental health, substance use disorder, and other human service programs that were included in the Human Services Block Grant ($84 million). Funding for these programs was reduced by 10 percent in the FY 2012/13 budget and no restoration was included in Governor Corbett’s current proposed budget.

- Results of a PCPA survey focused on the impact of the 10 percent cuts indicate that 31% of respondents have downsized programs and another 45% project closing programs or sites.
- Waiting lists continue to increase, fueled by high unemployment, widespread lack of insurance, and the influx of veterans and their families whose behavioral health needs are likely to be addressed in the community service system.
- With the implementation of the Human Services Block Grant, even greater cuts are possible as mental health and substance use disorder dollars may be diverted to other programs.
SUPPORT meaningful reform at the local level by eliminating the Human Services Block Grant and allowing counties flexibility to meaningfully reinvest unused funds back into those same services in subsequent years.

- With the closure of state institutions, and through Community Hospital Integration Project Program (CHIPP) and Southeast Integration Project Program (SIPP) funding, promises were made to individuals and to communities that the commonwealth would provide and maintain community mental health services and supports so that individuals would not be “dumped” into the streets, the jails, or emergency rooms in community hospitals.
- Keeping CHIPP/SIPP dollars in the Human Services Block Grant where they may be diverted to other programs undermines the promises made by Pennsylvania and shifts the burden back to local communities for care that is a state responsibility.

SUPPORT the governor’s proposed initiative to serve 90 new individuals from state hospitals in the community ($4.725 million). In order to continue to successfully divert individuals from institutional care, financial commitment to CHIPP must continue.

SUPPORT the governor’s proposed $18.5 million to provide for people on the Intellectual Disability (ID) Waiting List, the proposed $38.7 million in funding for increased utilization of ID community services, and the proposed $1.5 million to expand services to 118 adults diagnosed with an autism spectrum disorder.

- PCPA applauds the governor’s initiative to reduce the waiting list, but it is vital that the community services infrastructure be preserved by assuring adequate rates for services and fixed costs. Consequences of rate structure changes resulting from Act 22 are rates that are too low to sustain the provision of services to high-need individuals.

If services to Pennsylvanians in need of mental health, intellectual disability, autism, or addiction care are to remain accessible and effective, funding must be preserved and Pennsylvania’s safety net must be protected.

Questions and comments may be directed to George Kimes (george@paproviders.org) or Anne Leisure (anne@paproviders.org).