

The Mental Health Safety Net Coalition



Alliance of Community Service Providers

Brook Glen Behavioral Hospital

Clarion Psychiatric Center

Conference of Allegheny Providers (CAP)

Fairmount Behavioral Health System

Family Training and Advocacy Center (FTAC)

Foundations Behavioral Health

Friends Hospital

Horsham Clinic

Keystone Center

Keystone National Alliance for the Mentally Ill (NAMI)

Lancaster Behavioral Health Hospital

MAX Association

Meadows Psychiatric Center

Mental Health Association of PA (MHA)

Pennsylvania Association of County Administrators of Mental Health and Developmental Services (PACA MH/DS)

Pennsylvania Mental Health Consumer Association (PMHCA)

Pennsylvania Psychiatric Leadership Council (PPLC)

Rehabilitation and Community Providers Association (RCPA)

The Roxbury Treatment Center

Treatment Advocacy Center

February 14, 2022

Dear Pennsylvania Legislators,

On behalf of the Mental Health Safety Net Coalition, we are writing to state the urgent need for the General Assembly to not only support the \$36.6 million increase in funding for county mental health services in the Governor's proposed FY 2022/23 state budget, but also to add additional investments much needed in these critical behavioral health services.

As you know, the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic is creating an unprecedented constellation of challenges for our mental health system, including dramatic increases in the need for mental health services, significant health staff shortages, unprecedented changes in the labor market, increases in completed suicides, and heightened ongoing ravages of diseases of opioid addiction. Adequate funding for county mental health services is a crucial element of the Commonwealth's response to these shared challenges.

Importantly, the Governor's proposed increase will help offset the loss in purchasing power due to a decade of level funding. This money is critical to help counties get back to the effective level of resources they had 10 years ago, but it does not even begin to address all the gaps in our mental health system or surging demand for mental health services as we enter the third year of the global pandemic.

In addition to gap-filling services like supportive housing and residential services, county mental health funds are crucial for access to treatment in the counties' role as provider of last resort. There are uninsured individuals; there are individuals who have reached their private insurance limit that need services; and there are county community mental health services that are not available under private health plans.

As you may recall from our prior Coalition communications, the failure to invest in these mental health services is causing even greater state expenditures in other services, including Medicaid, corrections, and criminal justice, resulting in human suffering. As we recently shared in a multitude of preventable tragedies, this has threatened the safety of communities across the Commonwealth.

We are respectfully requesting the General Assembly's assistance with addressing this unfolding crisis in county community mental health services. These services require sustained investment of state funds on an ongoing, multi-year basis — and equally important consideration should be given to appropriate, one-time-only investments of ARPA funds to cover the capital costs of supportive housing and other residential services.

After more than a decade of level funding, we urge you to consider the \$36.6 million proposed by the Governor for FY 2022/23 as the starting point for a realistic examination of the need for increased funding for county mental health services.

Sincerely,

The Coalition of the Mental Health Safety Net