



## **2020 CCAP Priorities Key Talking Points for Counties**

### **BACKGROUND**

- Each of these priorities showcases counties' commitment to the core services they provide to improve the well-being of the people and communities of Pennsylvania.
- Counties deliver these services in partnership with the state, and seek to re-engage the General Assembly and administration about the broad role counties play on behalf of the commonwealth.
- Collaboration between the state and counties will lead to solutions that better reflect the needs of Pennsylvanians, improve stewardship of taxpayer dollars, reduce cost, increase local flexibility and assure the quality of services counties provide.

**Counties should tell their local stories, including examples of relevant impacts to their programs and those they serve, within each of the following priorities as appropriate.**

### **INCREASED FUNDING FOR MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES**

- Counties provide community-based mental health services such as community residential programs, family-based support, outpatient care and crisis intervention, which are critical to the well-being of our constituents and our communities.
- Even though state funding levels have direct impacts on the availability of county mental health services, for too many years state funding has lagged far behind needs.
- A targeted, strategic investment of state dollars into community mental health services at the county level is necessary to continue the existing safety net and bolster the availability of mental health services.
- The Behavioral HealthChoices program must also be preserved to allow counties to coordinate and invest in mental health and drug and alcohol programs and services that meet local needs and challenges.
- Close collaboration between the legislature, the administration and counties is critical to addressing the mental health system as a whole.

### **SOLUTIONS TO THE EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES CRISIS**

- Emergency medical services (EMS) are in a crisis, as many communities wrestle with a decline or outright lack of services.
- Both urban and rural areas experience difficulties in service capacity, although the basis for those capacity challenges may be different.
- Counties and the commonwealth are uniquely positioned to work together with their municipal partners to develop and implement EMS policy solutions that include securing sustainable resources and building system capacity to meet the needs of our citizens.

- CCAP's EMS Task Force has developed recommendations to help determine whether counties can play any role in assuring reliable provision of this vital public service.
- Counties will look to move forward to implement the Task Force recommendations, such as developing a toolbox that can assist each county in bringing together local stakeholders to review coverage needs, and seeking legislation to create EMS authorities.

### **COUNTY PROPERTY TAX REFORM**

- Counties rely on property taxes as their only source of locally generated general fund tax revenues.
- When costs and mandates go up, and state and federal funding go down, they have nowhere else to go but the property taxpayer to fund critical programs and services.
- Discussions on property tax reform at the state level continue to focus exclusively on schools – but policy makers must include counties to accurately capture the burden of taxpayers and bring true, comprehensive property tax reform to the commonwealth's property owners.
- Local taxing options – such as a sales, earned income or personal income tax – that can be used to offset county property taxes would give each county the ability to decide what portfolio of local taxes works most equitably for their constituents.

### **RURAL BROADBAND EXPANSION**

- Approximately 800,000 Pennsylvanians still do not have reliable internet service, even though it is vital to business, education, health care, emergency services and other key parts of everyday life.
- Without broadband, a significant part of the population is missing access to opportunities, while rural areas find it harder and harder to attract and retain residents and encourage business development.
- The commonwealth must develop partnerships among federal, state and local government, as well as the private sector, that can help make meaningful progress on rural broadband expansion.
- While there have been several initiatives proposed, we must continue to identify successful approaches and best practices to replicate in other communities, and partner with higher education and other research entities to leverage data and resources.

### **ADULT PROBATION FUNDING**

- Nearly all of Pennsylvania's counties provide adult probation services, which support community supervision options for non-violent offenders, reducing recidivism through evidence-based interventions that promote positive behavioral changes.
- Even though expectations of the county adult probation system are increasing, state funding has remained stagnant, limiting how effectively counties can use the programs as part of a comprehensive criminal justice system.
- Funding support from the second phase of the Justice Reinvestment Initiative is a critical first step, but increased state funding support is also needed to support county adult probation services.
- Counties and the state need to reexamine how we approach the judicial system and invest in our communities through rehabilitation rather than punishment.
- Increased and improved coordination of funding will allow the appropriate use of limited resources for increased public safety options.