



CCAP 2021 Priorities Status Report July 2021

CCAP members identified a total of five priority issues for 2021. Grassroots activity on the priorities began following their adoption at the 2020 Fall Conference. After a formal announcement in January, officers and staff launched efforts to work with the General Assembly and the administration to introduce and advance proposals. Work has continued throughout the spring months to meet with members of the General Assembly, educate, and discuss priorities in terms of the most pressing items related to the state's budget and elections reforms. Below are specific developments on each priority issue.

Elections Reforms: Pre-canvassing and Mail-in Ballot Application Deadlines

Following a number of hearings in both the House and Senate on elections issues throughout the spring, at which CCAP and several members testified, both chambers made legislative action a priority in the last weeks of June prior to the summer recess.

The Senate Special Committee on Election Integrity and Reform, which released its [report](#) on June 14, with recommendations including the counties' two top priorities, as well as recommendations on removing deceased individuals from the voter registration rolls, security measures for drop boxes, training for poll workers and poll watchers, voter ID and further discussions on funding. Subsequently, Sen. Argall introduced [SB 784](#), which accomplishes CCAP's top two requests in a clean bill. The bill had been scheduled for a vote by the Senate State Government Committee on June 22 but was passed over during the meeting and has not received further consideration.

In the meantime, following the release of his May [report](#) regarding the series of elections hearings his committee has held over the past few months, House State Government Committee chair Rep. Seth Grove introduced a comprehensive Election Code overhaul bill, [HB 1300](#), in mid-June. The bill did include CCAP's two priorities – five additional days for prec canvassing and moving the mail-in ballot application deadline back from 7 to 15 days. However, it also included a number of other substantive changes to election processes and procedures, and CCAP shared several questions and concerns with the bill's sponsors, only a few of which were addressed. Ultimately, counties continued to advocate for their two priorities, but asked for more time to review the remaining language with county input, as well as the time and resources to successfully implement any changes

House Bill 1300 was approved by the House and Senate just 15 days after its introduction, and the bill was ultimately vetoed by Governor Wolf as expected. Since the veto, Rep. Grove has indicated that no further efforts on election reforms will be undertaken in the House this session except for moving forward with a constitutional amendment on voter ID. The Senate has

indicated interest in trying to work on a bill that reflects a much narrower set of issues that were encompassed in its Special Committee on Election Integrity report.

In the midst of the legislative activity, on June 23, the [Election Law Advisory Board](#) released its [report](#) on election law in Pennsylvania as well. Under its legislative directive, the board evaluated and makes recommendations for amending the Election Code to improve the electoral process and implement best practices in election law administration.

Finally, there has also been an effort to implement a third-party audit of the November 2020 and May 2021 elections. As this report is being drafted, only three counties (Philadelphia, Tioga and York) have received this request from Sen. Mastriano, which encompasses voting equipment, ballots, contracts and other information, although the Senator has indicated he may issue similar requests to other counties, or potentially subpoenas. The Department of State has since issued a directive to counties that counties shall not provide access to third parties of state-certified electronic voting systems, or they will not be considered secure or reliable to use in subsequent elections

CCAP staff and members engaged in several significant advocacy efforts to achieve the top two CCAP priorities and to continue to emphasize that counties must be brought to the table to negotiate and assist with technical feedback on any bill to be considered. CCAP will continue to work on elections reforms throughout the summer legislative recess and will be engaging counties in an attempt to achieve the best outcomes for counties going into the November elections.

Broadband Expansion

Broadband continues to be echoed at all levels of government as one of the biggest hurdles of the 21st century. With the promise of significant federal funding that can be used for broadband expansion and other infrastructure projects to the state and counties, CCAP has continued to engage the General Assembly and Administration in targeted conversations to share the work of counties in broadband expansion efforts and identifying opportunities to partner and dovetail state and other expansion initiatives.

To help capture information, identify and share best practices surrounding broadband expansion and deployment initiatives, CCAP worked with Penn State Extension to develop a county survey to better understand county approaches to broadband development. Results from the survey have been culminated into a [report](#) that will help inform the commonwealth's plan for broadband development and bridging the digital divide.

Legislation aimed at addressing broadband expansion in the commonwealth has also seen recent movement. [Senate Bill 442](#), sponsored by Sen. Kristin Phillips-Hill (R-York), calls for an inventory of state-owned assets that the commonwealth could then leverage for the development of mobile broadband services. The legislation also includes an option for counties to add county-owned assets to the inventory if they would be interested in being part of the state's effort. This bill passed the House Consumer Affairs Committee on a vote of 23-2 and was

considered on the House floor without a final vote before the legislature broke for summer recess.

CCAP has continued working with several state agencies, including the Department of Community and Economic Development, Department of General Services, Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission and the Department of Agriculture to create educational, networking and open forum opportunities to allow counties to share best practices and gain a more holistic picture of broadband across the commonwealth. Additionally, CCAP has worked with several provider associations to make contact information for service providers available to counties in order to foster and facilitate future discussions and local solutions. With technological advances coupled with our experiences over the past year, we anticipate broadband access will continue to remain a key focus of budget and legislative conversations at the state and federal levels, especially as future infrastructure packages are developed and American Rescue Plan funding is allocated.

Solutions to the Emergency Medical Services Crisis

After several years of work, legislation to create the statutory authority for county or multi-municipal authorities for EMS delivery, one of the top initiatives under this priority, was introduced in late May by Sen. Lisa Baker (R-Luzerne) and Sen. Tim Kearney (D-Delaware) as [SB 698](#). CCAP has met with the new chairs of the Senate Veterans Affairs and Emergency Preparedness Committee, Sen. Patrick Stefano (R-Fayette) and Sen. Katie Muth (D-Montgomery), to advocate for this legislation as well as the other work of CCAP's EMS Task Force.

The summer edition of the CCAP County News will be focused on CCAP's EMS priority. Articles include an overview of the CCAP EMS Task Force work, an article from the sponsors of the EMS authority legislation, as well as insights from Pike County and others.

The EMS Task Force is continuing to review the funding needs to support the variety of service models in operation in the commonwealth, and is working to develop a toolbox of resources that can assist counties in bringing stakeholders and resources together to address local issues. Work is now underway with DCED's Center for Local Government Services on a pilot project with two sets of counties (Butler/Mercer and Tioga/Lycoming/Sullivan) to evaluate the current status of EMS services, including data gathering and working with local stakeholders, to develop a report and recommendations on potential local solutions to improve the delivery of EMS in those counties. The first draft reports were expected to be provided to CCAP in mid-July so that they could be reviewed for feedback on next steps and conclusions from the reports. The reports are expected to be completed by the fall of 2021, and will serve as the basis for further development of a broader toolbox.

Protect Funding for County Human Services

Pennsylvania counties deliver crucial human services on behalf of the state and federal government – services that protect our most vulnerable citizens, among them children suffering from abuse, those fighting substance abuse addictions, individuals with mental illness and developmental disabilities, and seniors in need of long-term care.

However, even though mandates and caseloads continue to increase, state funding support has been unable to keep up with demand. Counties continue to deal with the daily challenge of serving the ever-growing needs of their residents, such as the significant increases in workloads to county human service agencies, the toll of the opioid epidemic on families and their children and the lasting, unknown impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on Pennsylvania's residents and communities. Yet counties must also face the reality of ever-stagnant state funds to support those needs.

Gov. Wolf announced his FY 2021-2022 budget proposal in February, seeking level funding for many human services lines. On June 25, the Governor signed into law a final budget that is consistent with his request, leading to another year of essentially flat funding for most line items. Notably, \$282 million in federal relief funds were allocated to help nursing homes, assisted living and personal care homes. Funding is also included to establish a new Delaware County Health Department and a new Lackawanna County Health Department starting in January 2022 and county health departments are allocated more \$30 million overall, almost \$5 million more than the current fiscal year, but less than the \$8.2 million proposed by the Governor.

Increased Funding for Mental Health Services

In his FY 2021-2022 budget address in February, Gov. Wolf proposed level funding for the mental health community base line, setting the stage from which counties will work for the next several months. To that end, CCAP participated in a number of conversations with legislators, staff and other stakeholders in advancement of this priority. Budget hearings were held by the House and Senate Appropriations committees in late February and early March, where some legislators asked questions regarding the need for mental health funding.

Throughout June, there was very little information released regarding the status of FY 2021-2022 budget negotiations and CCAP continued to meet with new legislators and staff, committee chairs and executive directors to educate them on the need for mental health funding. Throughout this process, legislators and staff were largely supportive of the need for increased mental health funding.

In an effort to further educate and advocate on this critical priority, CCAP worked to provide additional education and talking points to our district representatives and members for targeted conversations with legislative leaders and others who may need more information on the complex funding situation for 2020 and 2021. The targeted education included discussing the historical level-funding for community-based mental health that counties have faced over the last decade causing the need for an investment in this line item, as well as the unique circumstances caused by the COVID-19 pandemic that will put additional strain on programs and services funded by base dollars at the county level.

However, despite the comprehensive efforts to seek a \$28 million increase for the mental health community base, the FY 2021-2022 only includes a nominal increase for mental health funding to counties, instead prioritizing mental health funding for schools.

Finally, conversations continue with the Department of Human Services and Department of Health, which have been fruitful. CCAP efforts to educate on the need to protect the Behavioral HealthChoices program was a success in the FY 2021-2022 budget.