

# LEGISLATIVE BULLETIN

COUNTY COMMISSIONERS ASSOCIATION OF PENNSYLVANIA  
THE VOICE OF PENNSYLVANIA COUNTIES

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## MAY IS MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH

As May marks Mental Health Awareness Month, counties across Pennsylvania are sounding the alarm: awareness alone is not enough. It's time to take urgent, meaningful action to rebuild and properly fund Pennsylvania's community-based mental health system.

For nearly two decades, funding for county mental health services has failed to keep pace with inflation and growing demand. As a result, critical services—like outpatient care for adults and children, crisis intervention, school-based programs, reentry support, day programs, and prevention—are stretched thin or at risk.

This year, counties are calling for targeted state investment that would allow counties to strengthen and expand crisis services, with a primary focus on crisis walk-in centers, which provide immediate, in-person care and reduce reliance on emergency rooms and law enforcement.

Pennsylvania residents cannot wait any longer. Counties are urging the state to designate May not just as Mental Health Awareness Month—but as **Mental Health Action Month**. A robust state-county partnership is essential to stabilize and strengthen the behavioral health system, improve outcomes, and ensure long-term success for individuals and communities across the commonwealth.

More information on this top county priority can be found on the Priorities [webpage](#) of the CCAP website.

## GENERAL ASSEMBLY ADVANCES KEY LEGISLATION

Over the past two weeks, both chambers of the General Assembly were in Harrisburg advancing legislation of relevance to counties.

[House Bill 2177](#), introduced by Robert Freeman (D-Northampton), updates requirements for how boroughs, cities, and counties advertise proposed ordinances prior to adoption. The bill requires that public notices provide clearer, more detailed information about an ordinance's purpose and impact. When the full text is not published, the summary must still highlight key elements, such as changes to taxes or fees, the creation of penalties, and the use of public funds. The bill passed the House on April 28 and has been referred to the Senate Local Government Committee for further consideration.

[House Resolution 63](#), introduced by Tarik Khan (D-Philadelphia), directs the Joint State Government Commission to study diversion programs and develop recommendations to improve existing programs and establish new ones, including models successfully implemented in other states. The report is due within one year of the resolution's adoption. This resolution was adopted by the House on April 27<sup>th</sup>.

[House Resolution 134](#), introduced by Melissa Cerrato (Pennsylvania state representative) (D-Montgomery), directs the Joint State Government Commission to study home- and community-based services for individuals with physical disabilities, intellectual disabilities, autism, and other developmental disabilities. The study will focus on streamlining the application process and improving service delivery. The resolution was reported from the House Human Services Committee on April 28 and now awaits consideration by the full House

## SENATE VEAP COMMITTEE ADVANCES EMS & PFAS BILLS

On Monday, April 21, [Senate Bill 1261](#), introduced by Doug Mastriano (R-Adams), was reported out of the Senate Veterans Affairs and Emergency Preparedness Committee and now moves to the full Senate for consideration. The bill amends Pennsylvania's consolidated statutes governing financial assistance and grant programs for fire companies and emergency medical services (EMS). It increases the maximum loan amounts available for purposes such as facility construction and renovation, apparatus and equipment purchases, and the repair or refinancing of existing assets. The legislation also extends repayment terms for larger loans and allows loan limits to adjust annually

based on inflation. In addition, it updates reporting requirements and includes incentives to encourage the consolidation of fire companies.

Similarly, [Senate Bill 980](#), introduced by Gene Yaw (R-Bradford), was also advanced by the committee and now awaits full Senate consideration. This bill focuses on firefighting equipment safety, particularly by reducing exposure to per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS). It increases the maximum loan amounts available to fire and EMS companies for equipment purchases and requires that newly purchased protective gear be free of PFAS. The bill also phases out the use of PFAS-containing firefighting foam, ultimately prohibiting manufacturers from selling such products in Pennsylvania beginning in 2027–2028.

## COMMISSIONERS TESTIFY ON DATA CENTER DEVELOPMENT

On April 17, the Center for Rural Pennsylvania Board of Directors and staff convened for the first hearing in a multi-part public hearing series examining the growth of data centers in Pennsylvania. This initial hearing mapped the current landscape across state, local, industry, and environmental perspectives.

Indiana County Commissioner Sherene Hess provided [testimony](#) outlining the opportunities, impacts, and policy considerations of large-scale data center development from a county government perspective. She emphasized that while projects like the proposed Homer City redevelopment represent a transformational economic opportunity, bringing significant investment, job creation, and energy innovation, they also require careful coordination of infrastructure, workforce capacity, public services, and environmental protections.

Hess stressed the importance of preserving local government authority in land use planning, arguing that counties must retain control over zoning and development decisions to balance growth with community needs. She opposed any legislation that would override local ordinances or comprehensive plans, noting that data centers create substantial impacts, such as increased energy demand, stormwater management challenges, noise, and changes to community character that require thorough local oversight.

In addition, Tioga County Commissioner Shane Nickerson delivered [testimony](#) on data center development, drawing on firsthand county-level experience. He outlined practical safeguards to mitigate potential impacts and described efforts to develop a local ordinance tailored to address community concerns. He also emphasized key financial considerations and the broader economic development opportunities these projects can generate. His testimony offered clear, experience-based guidance for officials working through similar development proposals and provided a useful framework for balancing growth with community priorities.

Counties remain committed to working with the General Assembly to ensure that local land use

authority and responsibilities are preserved as data centers continue to develop across the commonwealth.

## **\$711 MILLION APPROVED TO EXPAND BROADBAND ACCESS IN PENNSYLVANIA**

On April 29, Governor Josh Shapiro and Pennsylvania Broadband Development Authority (PBDA) Executive Director Brandon Carson [announced](#) that the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) has approved and finalized an agreement with the Commonwealth to deploy more than \$711 million through the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Program. These funds will support efforts to connect remaining unserved and underserved locations across Pennsylvania with reliable high-speed internet.

The proposed BEAD projects are intended to expand broadband access to homes and businesses that have historically lacked reliable service, particularly in rural and hard-to-reach areas. Investments will prioritize the extension of existing networks and the deployment of advanced infrastructure, including fiber and hybrid fiber-coaxial technologies, where feasible.

Updated resources for the BEAD program, including FAQs, can be found on the PBDA's [BEAD Program Page](#).

Visit the [Pennsylvania Broadband Development Authority's website](#) to learn more about its work to close the digital divide in the Commonwealth.

## **PA SUPREME COURT RULES CAST VOTE RECORDS ARE PUBLIC**

On April 28, the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania issued a unanimous decision holding that “cast vote records” (CVRs)—digital spreadsheets generated by voting systems that reflect how ballots are tabulated—constitute public records under Pennsylvania law.

The case arose from a request for CVRs from the 2020 general election in Lycoming County. County officials denied the request, arguing that releasing the data would be equivalent to disclosing the contents of ballot boxes or voting machines, which are protected under Pennsylvania election law.

The Court rejected that argument, concluding that CVRs are not physical ballots but rather data extracted from them. As such, they do not fall within statutory protections shielding ballot contents from disclosure. The Court emphasized that, when properly anonymized, these records do not compromise voter secrecy and are comparable to aggregated vote totals already made public.

Importantly, the Court limited its holding to the facts before it, noting that questions could remain where CVRs are not sufficiently anonymized or could be linked to individual voters.

This decision has immediate and practical implications for county election offices. Counties may now see an increase in requests for cast vote records under the Right-to-Know Law, requiring careful evaluation of how such requests are handled. The ruling also highlights the importance of ensuring that any released data is properly anonymized so that individual voters cannot be identified, particularly in smaller precincts or in cases involving unique ballot configurations.

Given the case-specific nature of the ruling and the potential for variation across counties, counties are strongly encouraged to consult with their solicitors when responding to requests for cast vote records or evaluating disclosure practices.

CCAP will monitor developments and provide updates to support counties as necessary.



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