

LEGISLATIVE BULLETIN

COUNTY COMMISSIONERS ASSOCIATION OF PENNSYLVANIA THE **VOICE** OF PENNSYLVANIA COUNTIES

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A MESSAGE FROM CCAP EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR KYLE KOPKO, Ph.D., J.D

Local government is where democracy comes to life. It's where decisions are made closest to the people, where public service meets real-world impact, and where communities find both leadership and solutions. Among all levels of government, counties stand at the center—delivering critical services, responding in times of crisis, and shaping the everyday quality of life for millions of Pennsylvanians.

With that in mind, it is the honor of a lifetime to serve as the new Executive Director of the County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania. As I complete my first week with CCAP, I want to express how excited and inspired I am to begin this work alongside you—Pennsylvania's county leaders and intergovernmental partners—at a time when the role of county government has never been more vital.

Though I am new to CCAP, I bring with me a deep appreciation for the challenges, responsibilities, and opportunities counties face. For the past five years, I served as Executive Director of the Center for Rural Pennsylvania, a bipartisan, bicameral legislative agency of the General Assembly. There, I worked directly with legislators, executive branch officials, and county stakeholders on issues such as broadband expansion, the opioid crisis, and workforce development. Prior to that, I spent a decade in higher education as a tenured political science professor and academic dean at Elizabethtown College.

In the months ahead, I will be traveling throughout the Commonwealth to meet with county commissioners, staff, and key stakeholders in person. These conversations are essential to ensuring that CCAP remains focused on the priorities of our members and forward-thinking in our advocacy. I want you to know that my door is open, and I welcome every opportunity to listen, engage, and collaborate. Feel free to contact me at kkopko@pacounties.org if I can be of assistance.

Together, we will strengthen the capacity of county government, amplify counties' unified voices, and champion the work that makes Pennsylvania's 67 counties thrive. I look forward to the work ahead and for the opportunity to speak with you soon.

SENATE FORUM UNDERSCORES THE NEED FOR MENTAL HEALTH FUNDING

On August 5, the Senate Republican Policy Committee convened an informational meeting to examine the state of mental health services across the commonwealth. The roundtable brought together mental health professionals and stakeholders from various sectors to discuss how state investments in prevention and treatment are being utilized, where service gaps remain, and how the commonwealth can strengthen its role in supporting and funding the behavioral health system.

Melanie Gordon, CCAP's Human Services and Criminal Justice Policy Director, [spoke](#) on behalf of counties, emphasizing their critical role in delivering community-based behavioral health services. She highlighted the significant challenges counties are grappling with, such as insufficient funding and ongoing workforce shortages. She also stressed the critical need for increased, long-term investments, especially in crisis intervention services, to effectively respond to rising community needs.

Stakeholders participating in the discussion included county behavioral health administrators, children and youth professionals, and representatives from county correctional facilities, all of whom play a key role in addressing mental health needs. Their shared message was clear: while counties work across systems to deliver care and find solutions, additional resources and better coordination are necessary to address the behavioral health crisis effectively.

Particularly compelling were the remarks from county jail officials, who described the strain on local correctional systems resulting from insufficient mental health services. They called for increased collaboration and targeted funding to address systemic shortcomings that can better divert individuals into treatment rather than incarceration.

CCAP also highlighted the need for a comprehensive continuum of care, noting persistent gaps in services that have resulted from decades of deinstitutionalization and variation in service availability across counties. Counties continue to work collaboratively with their partners to explore solutions, but the need for a more consistent and well-funded system remains critical. Counties extend their sincere thanks to Senator Lynda Schlegel Culver and Senator David Argall for their leadership in convening this important dialogue and for shining a spotlight on the critical issues facing Pennsylvania's mental health system.

As counties advocate for their [legislative priority](#) of securing \$100 million in the state budget for Fiscal Year 2025–2026, the meeting underscored the mounting pressure on counties and their partners to meet behavioral health needs amid changing conditions. With budget negotiations underway, counties remain committed to being a strong voice for increased mental health funding and systemic reform.

COUNTIES URGE ACTION AS FUNDING DELAYS CONTINUE

With August underway and no final state budget agreement in place, counties across Pennsylvania are confronting growing challenges in delivering essential services to their residents. In an [op-ed](#) released this week, CCAP President and Indiana County Commissioner Sherene Hess underscored the consequences of the ongoing budget impasse, particularly for the human services counties are mandated to provide on the state's behalf. Without an enacted budget and corresponding code bills, the commonwealth cannot release funding for many of its core obligations.

Counties are now bracing for missed payments that support vital programs such as mental and behavioral health services, child protective services, support for individuals with

intellectual disabilities, substance use treatment, and housing assistance for those experiencing homelessness. These services form the backbone of Pennsylvania's human services safety net. State funding is not a luxury – it's essential to ensuring these programs remain operational and responsive to community needs.

Budget Secretary Uri Monson recently issued a formal communication to counties outlining the implications of the impasse, warning of delayed payments from key Health and Human Services departments over the next six weeks. The figures shared are deeply concerning. Hundreds of millions of dollars in state funding remain in limbo, creating potential for significant disruptions in the services residents depend on every day.

Counties are urging the General Assembly and the Administration to finalize the state budget without further delay, so that critical funding can flow and services can continue uninterrupted. At the same time, counties are advocating for long-term safeguards to prevent future disruptions. One such measure is [House Bill 1609](#), sponsored by Representative Marla Brown (R-Lawrence), which would ensure continued funding for core human services, such as medical assistance, child welfare, mental health care, and substance use treatment, even during a budget impasse.

What's at stake isn't just a legislative deadline – it's the ability of counties to meet their legal responsibilities, respond to residents in crisis, and ensure the safety, health, and stability of communities across the commonwealth.

U.S. SENATE COMMITTEE ADVANCES HOUSING REFORM

On July 29, the U.S. Senate Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs unanimously advanced the bipartisan [Renewing Opportunity in the American Dream \(ROAD\) to Housing Act](#). This legislation aims to strengthen local housing strategies by providing new federal funding streams, technical assistance, and support for data modernization, key tools for counties working to address housing challenges in their communities.

The bill reauthorizes existing housing programs while introducing increased flexibility and new federal investments. A notable provision within the legislation is the Whole-Home Repairs Act, which would establish a five-year pilot program under the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The program would provide grants and forgivable loans to low- and moderate-income homeowners, as well as qualifying small landlords, to address critical home repairs. This initiative is modeled after Pennsylvania's successful Whole-Home Repairs Program.

Counties have expressed strong support for the reauthorization of this initiative, which has been retitled the PA Home Preservation Program under [House Bill 1650](#). This legislation is designed to help local governments maintain and improve the state's existing housing stock. It authorizes grants to counties, or partnerships of local governments, with experience in housing rehabilitation or restoration. Funding may also be subgranted to eligible partner organizations. These grant funds can be used to address habitability issues, enhance energy or water efficiency, or make homes more accessible for individuals with disabilities. House Bill 1650 passed the House in late June and now awaits consideration by the Senate Urban Affairs and Housing Committee.

For a more in-depth analysis of the ROAD to Housing Act, please refer to the National Association of Counties (NACo) [website](#).

WHITE HOUSE SHIFTS HOMELESSNESS POLICY FOCUS

On July 24, the White House issued an Executive Order directing federal agencies to adjust their approach to addressing homelessness. The order directs the Departments of Justice, Health and Human Services, Housing and Urban Development, and Transportation to revise key grant programs and policies that impact local governments.

The order emphasizes institutional treatment for individuals with serious mental illness or substance use disorder who are unsheltered and unable to care for themselves. It also outlines a shift in federal funding priorities, encouraging support for jurisdictions that enforce laws related to open drug use and unauthorized encampments while limiting funding for harm reduction strategies such as supervised consumption sites. Additionally, it calls for increased grantee accountability and, where permitted by law, expanded data sharing between health and public safety agencies.

As part of the policy changes, counties will no longer be able to use discretionary Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMSHA) funding for certain harm reduction services, including syringe service programs and supervised consumption sites. On July 29, SAMHSA issued a [letter](#) clarifying the administration's updated requirements and specifying which supplies and services remain eligible for support under the revised guidelines.

For a more in-depth analysis of the Executive Order, please refer to the National Association of Counties (NACo) [website](#).

IFO ISSUES JULY REVENUE UPDATE

The Independent Fiscal Office (IFO) released the monthly [revenue update](#) for July 2025, reporting that General Fund collections totaled \$3.04 billion, an increase of \$45 million (+1.5%) compared to July 2024.

July collections were led by stronger than expected personal income tax revenues, which totaled \$1.29 billion, up \$94 million from July 2024, primarily driven by withholding payments. Sales and use tax revenues totaled \$1.36 billion, an increase of \$74 million over July 2024. Corporate net income tax collections were \$142 million, a decrease of \$71 million compared to last year. This decline was largely attributed to a one-time \$60 million payment received in July 2024 that would typically have been remitted in June.

Fiscal year-to-date collections for FY 2025-26 total \$3.04 billion, reflecting a 1.5% increase over the same period in FY 2024-25.

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