



June 12, 2023

The Honorable Josh Shapiro
Governor of Pennsylvania
Office of the Governor
508 Main Capitol Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120

RE: Establishment of an *Office of Health and Human Services Workforce, Innovation and Reform* and a *Governor's Health and Human Services Workforce Reform Advisory Council*

Dear Governor Shapiro:

I am writing on behalf of the Pennsylvania Council of Children, Youth, & Family Services. An association of close to 100 service providers, representing approximately 12,000 workers, in the fields of child welfare, juvenile justice, and children's behavioral health services.

It has come to my attention that you are considering, or will soon be asked to consider, the establishment of an *Office of Health Care Workforce, Innovation and Reform* and a *Governor's Health Care Workforce Reform Cabinet and Advisory Council* to address the Commonwealth's health care workforce crises. We recognize and thank you for your emphasis on strategies to address workforce crises in Pennsylvania; your leadership is much needed and appreciated. We ask, however, that you consider expanding this Office and Cabinet/Advisory Council to be inclusive of Health and Human Services, thereby establishing an *Office of Health and Human Services Workforce, Innovation and Reform* and a *Governor's Health and Human Services Workforce Reform Advisory Council*.

While the healthcare industry struggles with a 31 percent average vacancy rate for Registered Nurses who directly care for patients in inpatient hospital settings, a recent survey by the Pennsylvania Child Welfare Resource Center¹ found that the human services workforce is challenged at all levels and areas. Within county children and youth workers, for example:

- 34 percent of all Pennsylvania Caseworker 1, 2, and 3 positions were not filled as of March 1, 2023

¹ University of Pittsburgh School of Social Work Pennsylvania Child Welfare Resource Center. *Pennsylvania Public Child Welfare Workforce Statistics*. Child Welfare Resource Center Steering Committee Meeting. May 24, 2023. <https://pccyfs.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/RCSC-PowerPoint-5.25.23-2.pdf>

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- 18 percent of supervisor positions were vacant, and the highest reported vacancy rate was 89 percent. Also, as a result of turnover and vacancies, 17 percent of supervisors were carrying cases, a responsibility that is not regularly expected of a supervisor
- 30 counties reported vacancy rates of 30 percent or higher

For the private service provider workforce, a recent study of the child welfare workforce in Philadelphia² showed:

- Community Umbrella Agencies estimated an average turnover rate of about 45 percent with vacancies ranging from 21 to 60 vacant positions
- Additionally, this resulted in an average of 81 cases assigned that put staff over the required 10 families per case manager ratio
- In order to offset the workforce strain, these agencies have resorted to an average of 7 supervisors carrying cases, in addition to Case Management Directors, admissions specialists, aftercare workers, as well as workers from other departments and divisions within their agency

The Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education (PASSHE) estimates that “Pennsylvania will need 12% more social services providers, including social workers, by 2030, and worker shortages could hinder people getting the support and care they need.”³ Much like the nursing field, a significant safety net of human services is at risk if Pennsylvania does not act now.

PCCYFS affirms that the issues facing the workers of health and human services go hand-in-hand. There is sufficient overlap and connectivity among the two fields to justify the development of an *Office of Health and Human Services Workforce, Innovation and Reform* and a *Governor’s Health and Human Services Workforce Reform Advisory Council*. Social factors and determinants unquestionably impact the physical and mental well-being needs of individuals and, alternatively, healthcare organizations are aptly positioned to identify social risks and needs. There are a number of organizations, associations, and entities that are presently sounding the alarm on the human services workforce shortage; they would unequivocally support your leadership in this area.⁴

² Philadelphia Child Welfare Workforce Task Force. (2022) *The State of Philadelphia’s Child Welfare Workforce: Findings and Recommendations*. <https://pccyfs.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/PHL-CWTF-Report-FINAL.pdf>

³ Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education. (2023 April 10) *PASSHE’S Plan to Address the Social Worker Shortage* [Press release]. <https://www.passhe.edu/News/Pages/Releases.aspx?q=2023-4-10-plan-to-address-pa-social-services-shortage>

⁴ Direct Care Works. (2022 February 9) *Pa. faces a human services workforce crisis. Only lawmakers can fix it: State government is sitting on billions of dollars in surplus revenue as the crisis worsens and needs go unmet* [Press release]. https://www.paproviders.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Release_Lawmakers-Must-Address-Workforce-Crisis_2.9.21_FINAL.pdf; Micek, J. (2023, January 11) Report: ID/A worker shortage fueled by low wages, high turnover. <https://www.penncapital-star.com/government-politics/report-id-a-worker-shortage->

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We look forward to working with your office on this endeavor to move Pennsylvania forward and appreciate your attention to this request. I have also enclosed herewith a draft executive order for your consideration. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at terryc@pccyfs.org or 717-651-1725.

Sincerely,



Terry L. Clark, MPA
President and CEO
Pennsylvania Council of Children, Youth & Family Services

Encl.

[fueled-by-low-wages-high-turnover-wednesday-morning-coffee/](#); Meyer, K. (2023). 1000s in PA could lose Medicaid as state lacks workers. Spotlight PA. <https://www.spotlightpa.org/news/2023/04/pa-medicaid-snap-food-stamps-rollbacks-staffing/>; Volk, S., & Christie, J. (2022, November 3). Crushing caseloads and low wages drive out foster care workers, but children pay the price. <https://www.inquirer.com/news/philadelphia-foster-care-caseloads-worker-turnover-dhs-hope-jones-20221103.html>.

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Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Governor's Office
Executive Order

WHEREAS, the citizens of the Commonwealth cannot receive accessible and affordable healthcare or human services of the highest quality without sufficiently adequately trained, compensated and employed staff to meet the full continuum of their social service and healthcare needs.

WHEREAS, the Commonwealth is facing a foreboding shortage of health and human services workers to adequately provide physical, behavioral, community-based, in-home, out-of-home, and long-term care needed by its residents, both children and adults, and this pre-existing shortage has only been exacerbated by the pandemic.

WHEREAS, the Commonwealth agencies responsible for licensing, establishing training requirements, regulating agencies, and providing funding have been delegated overlapping responsibilities, identified limited funding, and have not worked cohesively to assure an adequate health and human services workforce.

WHEREAS, it is the responsibility of the Commonwealth to determine how best to eliminate employment barriers such as licensure requirements, scope of practice, regulation, compensation rates, education standards, and other factors that impede the adequacy of the State's health and human services workforce now and in the future.

WHEREAS, the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education recognizes both nursing and social services as two of six high-growth fields where additional investment will be needed to establish a stronger pipeline of social service workers from the classroom to the workforce.

WHEREAS, the establishment of an Office of Health and Human Services Workforce Innovation and Reform and the establishment of the Governor's Health and Human Services Workforce Reform Advisory Council will coordinate and implement the Commonwealth's Health and Human Services Workforce Innovation and Reform Agenda.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Josh Shapiro, Governor of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and other laws of the Commonwealth, do hereby establish the **Office of Health and Human Services Workforce, Innovation and Reform** and the **Governor's Health and Human Services Workforce Reform Advisory Council (Council)** and order and direct as follows:

1. **Office of Health and Human Services Workforce Innovation and Reform.**

The Office of Health and Human Services Workforce Innovation and Reform shall be managed by the Director of the Office of Health and Human Services Workforce Innovation and Reform (hereinafter referred to as the “Director”), who shall serve at the pleasure of and report director to the Governor. The Director, in consultation with the Office of Administration, shall determine the appropriate staffing levels and associated classifications necessary to support the operation of the Office of Health and Human Services Workforce Innovation and Reform.

The health and human services workforce includes licensed and unlicensed professions in all health and human services settings, including but not limited to physical health, oral health, mental/behavioral health, long-term care, community-based services, children’s services, child welfare, and juvenile justice.

- a. **Purpose.** The purpose of the Office of Health and Human Services Workforce Innovation and Reform is to coordinate the Commonwealth’s Health and Human Services Workforce Reform Agenda. In coordinating the Commonwealth’s Health and Human Services Workforce Reform Agenda, the Office of Health and Human Services Workforce Innovation and Reform shall create a strategic plan within six (6) months to do the following and to implement such plan once approved by the Governor:
 - i. Prioritize licensed and unlicensed health and human services professions that:
 1. Have a high rate of burnout, turnover, and shortage,
 2. Identify the greatest public health and human services needs in the Commonwealth, and/or
 3. Create jobs in communities facing geographic, racial, ethnic, age, or gender disparities in health and human services outcomes
 - ii. For the prioritized professions, facilitate the analysis of administrative, licensure (scope of practice), certification, credentialing, reimbursement, education, training, fiscal, and other policies and practices.

- iii. Oversee the redesign of operations, infrastructure, and funding, and
 - iv. Direct the creation and maintenance of a system to assure the accountability of designated agencies for their assigned powers, duties and responsibilities, including the establishment of a health and human services data center to support the work of the Office of Health and Human Services Workforce Innovation and Reform.
2. **Health and Human Services Workforce Reform Advisory Council.** The Office of Health and Human Services Workforce Innovation and Reform shall establish and chair a Health and Human Services Workforce Reform Advisory Council (hereinafter referred to as “Advisory Council”).
- a. **Purpose.** The purpose of the Advisory Council is to identify gaps, needs, and potential resources to improve the workforce-related challenges and offset current trends to advance the health and human services workforce.
 - i. The Advisory Council shall advise the Governor on matters relating to health and human services workforce reform, including the development of a strategic plan and oversee its implementation.
 - b. **Membership.**
 - i. The Advisory Council shall consist of the following members:
 1. Director of the Office of Health and Human Services Workforce Innovation and Reform
 2. Secretary of Human Services or the Secretary’s designee
 3. Secretary of State or the Secretary’s designee
 4. Secretary of Education or the Secretary’s designee
 5. Secretary of Labor and Industry or the Secretary’s designee
 6. Commissioner of Insurance or the Commissioner’s designee
 7. Budget Secretary or the Secretary’s designee

8. Secretary of Budget and Planning or the Secretary's designee
9. Secretary of Aging or the Secretary's designee
10. Secretary of Health or the Secretary's designee
11. Secretary of Drug and Alcohol Programs or the Secretary's designee
12. A health care provider
13. An adult human services provider
14. Children's mental health, juvenile justice, or child welfare provider
15. Additional members as appointed by the Governor. Such additional members shall reflect the priorities of the Pennsylvania health and human services workforce needs, including both adult and children's services. Additional members may include representatives from Pennsylvania's healthcare educational and training programs, representatives from Pennsylvania's human services educational and training programs, associations, and consumer groups.
16. The Director shall chair the Advisory Council.

c. Procedures.

- i. A majority of members in attendance at a meeting of the Council shall constitute a quorum.
- ii. Council members may attend meetings in-person or remotely by electronic or telephonic means. In-person and remote participation shall be considered attendance for purposes of constituting a quorum.

d. Terms. All members shall serve at the pleasure of the Governor.

- e. **Compensation.** Members of the Advisory Council shall serve without compensation for their services except that such members may be reimbursed the necessary and actual expenses incurred in attending meetings of the Advisory Council, unless remotely, and in the performance of their duties in accordance with established Commonwealth policy.
- f. **Council Responsibilities.** The Advisory Council shall have the following responsibilities:
 - i. Within six (6) months of this Order, develop a strategic plan to direct the restructuring of the Commonwealth's health and human services workforce system and the implementation of its Health and Human Services Workforce Innovation and Reform Agenda for the Commonwealth's present and future health and human services workforce needs.
 - ii. Oversee the implementation of the strategic plan and the Commonwealth's Health and Human Services Workforce Reform Agenda.
- g. **Interagency Cooperation.**
 - i. The Council may draw resources from each Council member agency, including policy, clinical, analytical, budget, and other staff, to assist the Council's efforts.
 - ii. The Council may draw upon other Commonwealth agencies as needed to promote health and human services workforce best practices in all policies.
 - iii. The Council member agencies may enter into agreements, as permitted by law, to integrate, review, and analyze existing Commonwealth data across agencies to support evidence-based decision making.
 - iv. Members of the Advisory Council shall report to the Office of Health and Human Services Workforce Innovation and Reform for all accountabilities related to the Commonwealth's Health and Human Services Reform Agenda.

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3. **Effective Date.** The Executive Order shall take effect immediately and shall remain in effect unless revised or rescinded by the Governor.