



July 17, 2023

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

Dear Governor Shapiro:

I am writing to request clarity as to whether child welfare and juvenile justice payments will continue during the Fiscal Year 2024 budget impasse, as areas that affect the “health, safety, and protection of Pennsylvanians,” under the umbrella of “home and community-based services,” outlined in your [Budget Impasse Question and Answers document](#). And, if not, we ask that you exercise your executive authority to add child welfare and juvenile justice services as additional “essential services,” which would allow these programs to continue to receive funding in the event of a budget impasse.

As your budget office’s document outlines, “The Commonwealth will continue operations for all critical functions that impact the health, safety and/or welfare of the citizens of Pennsylvania,” which should include child welfare and juvenile justice services. Child welfare and juvenile justice systems offer life-saving services. Withholding child welfare funding will expose thousands of Pennsylvania’s children, youth, and families to further risk of maltreatment or neglect and similarly, juvenile justice services offer critical community safety supports. Child welfare and juvenile justice services were deemed essential during the COVID-19 pandemic and we respectfully request that you take a similar position presently.

This network of agencies is still struggling to recover from past budget delays, also due in part to the continued underfunding of these services and will not be able to sustain operations without continued payments. During Pennsylvania’s FY2015-2016 budget impasse, private agencies, acting on behalf of the state and counties, continued to work around the clock to minimize disruption to the children, families, and communities for which the Commonwealth is legally responsible, without any federal, county, or state funds. Many agencies exhausted their reserve funds, borrowed monies, furloughed or laid off staff, and some agencies have even had to close their doors. These systems are not equipped to take similar measures today; interest rates have skyrocketed, good workers are harder to recruit and retain, and the pandemic has also depleted financial reserves.

While we are hopeful that this FY2024 budget stalemate would not be as lengthy as others we have seen in past years, without designation as an “essential service” or a commitment from your office to continue to fund these services during a budget impasse, we risk further abuse or neglect to Pennsylvania’s most vulnerable citizens as the financial health of the agencies that provide these services is untenable. As such, we are requesting clarity on your position regarding payments to the child welfare and juvenile justice services during this budget stalemate.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions. I look forward to hearing from you.

Regards,

Terry L. Clark, MPA
President & CEO

cc: Lindsey Mauldin

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