



**Pennsylvania Department of Health
2014-15 Budget, Opening Remarks
House of Representatives Appropriations Committee
Michael Wolf, Secretary
Dr. Carrie DeLone, M.D., Physician General
February 24, 2014**

Good afternoon. Dr. DeLone and I want to thank Chairman Adolph, Chairman Markosek and the rest of the House Appropriations Committee and other Representatives here today for the invitation to speak with you regarding the Governor's proposed 2014-15 budget for the Department of Health. Before we begin with questions, we would like to highlight our budget priorities for the department. In September of 2013, Governor Corbett announced his *Healthy Pennsylvania* plan to improve access to quality, affordable health care coverage in Pennsylvania. The Department of Health's budget priorities build on the core areas of the Governor's *Healthy Pennsylvania* plan and work towards building a stronger Pennsylvania.

To provide improved access to quality, affordable community-based health care services, the budget provides an additional \$4 million for a total of \$8 million in funding to the Community-Based Health Care program. The Community-Based Health Care program provides grant funds to new health centers and clinics for startup costs or to existing health centers and clinics to provide additional services. The health care centers and clinics provide vital primary care services, including mental health services, to medically underserved areas of the state. The new investments of \$4 million will provide 40 additional grants to health centers and clinics.

Further expanding access in rural and medically underserved areas of the state, the budget provides an additional \$4 million for loan repayment assistance for health care practitioners who commit to working in primary care. The funding provides an additional 70 awards to physicians, dentists and other practitioners who agree to work in underserved areas of the state. To help address the growing primary care shortage in our rural areas, the budget also calls for funding to create 12 new residency slots for medical school graduates who commit to providing primary care in a rural Pennsylvania community upon completion of residency training.

The Department of Health is also working to promote access to quality care through telemedicine as part of *Healthy Pennsylvania*. Technology provides the opportunity to offer health care services in rural areas or places in our Commonwealth where primary or specialty care is needed but geography is a barrier. Through telemedicine services, patients can be connected to the quality care they need while remaining in their communities. The Department of Health has joined with providers, hospitals and other interested parties to identify the opportunities the new service can and will provide.

Finally, the Department of Health is excited to announce the *Healthy Pennsylvania* Public Health Summit in April of 2014 that will showcase best practices in community public health programs. The summit will provide an opportunity for the Governor and the Department of Health to begin the State Health Improvement Plan by highlighting the promising community practices the state can build upon to improve the public health of the Commonwealth.

The Department of Health would also like to thank the members of the legislature for their work in getting several pieces of landmark legislation passed in the past year, including:

- Act 10 of 2013 - Provided \$4 million to establish the Community-Based Health Care Subsidy program to assist the Commonwealth in creating new community-based health care clinics and to expand services at existing clinics. These community-based clinics create immediate access and enhance preventative primary care services to underserved areas and uninsured individuals of the state.
- Act 59 of 2013 – Requiring the Department to administer a real-time stop-sale system to track and monitor ephedrine and pseudoephedrine sales in the Commonwealth.
- Act 60 of 2013 – Modernized the hospital licensure process by instituting best practices that are up-to-date with national accreditation standards and Medicare Conditions of Participation. Through Act 60, the Department of Health can grant “deemed status” licensure to facilities accredited by an approved national accreditation organization reducing the fiscal and time burden of hospitals that already opt for accredited certifications and allowing hospitals to focus more on quality and efficient patient care. Implementation began January 1, 2014.
- Act 122 of 2013 – Clarified the Department of Health’s authority to inspect clinical laboratories, including out of state labs. It granted the department authority to exempt out of state laboratories from inspection if an out of state clinical lab is accredited, certified or licensed under the Federal laboratory law.

I would also like to note that this past year the Department, working in collaboration with the Departments of Public Welfare, Insurance, Aging and Drug and Alcohol Programs as well as numerous stakeholders, oversaw the effort to design and develop a Pennsylvania specific plan for health care innovation and delivery system transformation. A \$1.6 million federal grant from the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Innovation was used to convene stakeholders and prepare a final plan that could be used as the roadmap to improving the quality and coordination of care delivered in the Commonwealth.

The Governor’s proposed budget builds a stronger Pennsylvania while supporting essential programs that help increase access to quality care for all Pennsylvanians. The investments outlined in the Governor’s budget will create an improved and stronger

infrastructure for delivering and providing access to public health services and programs throughout the state and, most importantly, helps improve the safety and well-being of all Pennsylvanians.

We welcome your questions today so that we can discuss these and other initiatives in greater detail, and I look forward to working with you during the upcoming fiscal year on these important health matters.