



**Pennsylvania Department of Health
2016-17 Budget, Opening Remarks
Pennsylvania House of Representatives
Appropriations Committee
Dr. Karen Murphy, PhD, RN, Secretary
*March 8, 2016***

Good afternoon. I want to thank Chairman Adolph, Chairman Markosek, our oversight Chairs Representatives Baker and Fabrizio and members of the House Appropriations Committee and others here today for the invitation to speak with you regarding the Governor's proposed 2016-17 budget for the Department of Health. Before we begin, I would like to highlight our budget priorities for the department. The Department of Health's budget priorities build on these core areas of the Governor's plan and work towards building a stronger, healthier Pennsylvania.

The Department of Health's primary mission is to improve the health of all Pennsylvanians. We are committed to fulfilling this mission and responsibly directing our resources to achieve our goal.

I'd like to begin by talking about the Department's initiatives to improve customer service and operational efficiency. As a former CEO, I fully understand how important both are in order to be successful. I have the privilege of serving on the GO-TIME Advisory Committee for the Administration as well as implementing GO-TIME initiatives in the department. The initiative has realized considerable success and continues to evolve. In the Department of Health, we have several GO-TIME initiatives underway. We recently announced the newly established Division of Health Informatics, which will leverage data collected by the department to make fact-based public health decisions. In addition, we are working on modernizing the state's death registration system. The modernization will not only improve customer services, it will also result in additional revenues of approximately \$400,000 annually when fully implemented. We are working to enhance the mobility of our workforce utilizing mobile technology. We will be working to transition the Quality Assurance survey and certification field staff to use the technology. These are only a few examples that the department is working on that will result in a more efficient, cost effective department that operates in a culture of continuous performance improvement.

This year's budget, will allow the department to continue to build on important initiatives to ensure a "government that works." Over the past year, an important priority of the department has been improving the quality of nursing home care for all Pennsylvanians. To that end, the department formed a nursing home task force comprised of national and state experts in nursing home quality. We have invited Auditor General DePasquale to review the current process of the department's management of the complaint. Later this year, we plan to publish the task force's

report along with the findings of the Auditor General. It is our intent to recommend revisions to the regulations guiding nursing home quality.

A significant priority of the department is our work on prescription drug abuse and heroin addiction. In my testimony last year, I stated that in my thirty year career in health care, I have never seen a public health crisis as devastating as this one. If anything, my work in the past year has served to reinforce that sentiment. Since 2002, there have been more deaths annually caused by drug overdoses than auto accidents. The most recent data indicates that for 2014 alone, there were at least 800 deaths where heroin was a contributing factor. I know that you are all hearing from your constituents about the tragic loss of life and pain to families this dreadful epidemic has caused. The Wolf Administration is committed to addressing this crisis, and in a collaborative effort has convened an interagency committee to tackle the epidemic from every angle possible.

This past year, we have taken action to prevent opioid overdose deaths with the use of Naloxone. Thanks to the passage of Act 139 of 2014 Naloxone is now available to more Pennsylvanians than ever before. The Department has been working in conjunction with the Department of Human Services, the State Police, and the Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs to explore greater usage of Naloxone by first responders, as well as other statewide policies to combat this epidemic. In addition, the Departments of Health, State, Education and Drug and Alcohol Programs cosigned a letter to school superintendents, principals, school physicians and nurses urging them to have naloxone available in every public high school in the Commonwealth. It is our goal to decrease the number of deaths caused by an overdose.

This year we will implement the much needed prescription drug monitoring program, also known as the Achieving Better Care by Monitoring All Prescriptions legislation sponsored by Senator Vance. This system will alert medical professionals to signs of potential prescription medication abuse, and allow them to make better treatment decisions for their patients. The Governor has proposed \$3.1 million in state funding to help establish program operations. The Department of Health will be working with the ABC MAP Board of Directors, sister agencies to develop a comprehensive plan to leverage the drug monitoring program to decrease prescription drug abuse.

We are also focusing on improving our public health initiatives. This year we will be implementing important recommendations made by the Lyme Disease Task Force. The committee's recommendations are currently being evaluated by Legislative Budget and Finance Committee.

We will also be working with school nurses on implementing the newly developed immunization regulations. We will be working with schools to identify children in need of access to primary care to ensure that they receive the recommended immunizations in a timely fashion. This will protect all children attending schools in the commonwealth from contracting preventable communicable diseases.

We continue to monitor the most recent emerging global public health threat, Zika virus. The department is in continual contact with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to follow the public health crisis. To date, the mosquito that carries the disease has not been found in

Pennsylvania. We will continue to monitor this disease with guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The Department of Health is actively engaged in Governor Wolf's Health Innovation in Pennsylvania initiative. As one of his top priorities, over 200 stakeholders across the state representing insurers, providers, hospitals, academic health centers, business leaders, consumers, population health experts, and foundations are engaged in identifying innovative approaches to improve health for all Pennsylvanians. This work is focusing on three priorities: achieving price and quality transparency, accelerating the transition to paying for value in health care services, and redesigning our approach to rural health. I am pleased to be a member of this interagency effort to advance multi-payer, health and health care delivery system transformation across the Commonwealth. We are in the process of developing a Pennsylvania specific plan and the Governor's proposed budget includes funding to advance this important work that will lead to better health, better health care and smarter spending for all Pennsylvanians.

Governor Wolf's proposed budget continues to build a stronger Pennsylvania while supporting essential programs that will support the work of the Department in creating a healthier Pennsylvania.

In conclusion, Governor Wolf has worked to make sure that Pennsylvania's government is responsive and responsible in fulfilling its duty to provide essential health services to citizens.

It is our hope that a budget is reached that addresses the structural deficit and allows the department to build on the progress made in the past year by continuing to improve the health of all Pennsylvanians with smart investments as opposed to reduction of services that would result in a negative impact on the health and health services for all Pennsylvanians.

We welcome your questions today so that we can discuss these and other initiatives in greater detail, and I look forward to continue to work with you on these important health matters.