

1 HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
2 COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA

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4 DEPARTMENT OF AGING

5 House Appropriations Committee

6 Main Capitol Building
7 House Chamber
8 Harrisburg, Pennsylvania

9 Tuesday, February 16, 2021

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11 MAJORITY COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

12 Honorable Stanley Saylor, Majority Chairman
13 Honorable Rosemary Brown
14 Honorable Lynda Schlegel-Culver
15 Honorable Torren Ecker
16 Honorable Jonathan Fritz
17 Honorable Keith Greiner
18 Honorable Doyle Heffley
19 Honorable Johnathan Hershey
20 Honorable Lee James
21 Honorable John Lawrence
22 Honorable Zach Mako
23 Honorable Natalie Mihalek
24 Honorable Tim O'Neal
25 Honorable Clint Owlett
Honorable Chris Quinn
Honorable Greg Rothman
Honorable Meghan Schroeder
Honorable James Struzzi
Honorable Jesse Topper
Honorable Ryan Warner
Honorable Dave Zimmerman

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1 MINORITY COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

2 Honorable Matt Bradford, Minority Chairman
3 Honorable Donna Bullock
4 Honorable Morgan Cephas
5 Honorable Austin Davis
6 Honorable Elizabeth Fiedler
7 Honorable Marty Flynn
8 Honorable Patty Kim
9 Honorable Emily Kinkead
10 Honorable Leanne Krueger
11 Honorable Benjamin Sanchez (virtual)
12 Honorable Peter Schweyer
13 Honorable Joe Webster

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NON-COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

Honorable Gary Day
Honorable Rob Mercuri
Honorable Mark Gillen
Honorable Carrie DelRosso
Honorable Steve Samuelson

1 STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:

2 David Donley
3 Majority Executive Director

4 Ritchie LaFaver
5 Deputy Executive Director

6 Ann Baloga
7 Minority Executive Director

8 Tara Trees, Esquire
9 Minority Chief Counsel

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DEPARTMENT OF AGING

Secretary Robert Torres

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1 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: Mr.
2 Secretary, we are joined by Secretary Robert
3 Torres, Department of Aging. Mr. Secretary, we can
4 have you, and what I'd like you to do, Mr.
5 Secretary, if you would introduce who else is with
6 you on here who will may be providing testimony, if
7 you would introduce them.

8 (Pause). Can you unmute? Yeah.

9 SECRETARY TORRES: Can you hear me now,
10 Mr. Chairman?

11 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: There you
12 are, Mr. Secretary. Would you introduce those who
13 are going to provide possible testimony today? And
14 then after you introduce those members of your
15 staff, I will swear all of you in.

16 SECRETARY TORRES: Yes, sir. Joining me
17 this afternoon is Deputy Secretary Steve Horner and
18 PACE Program Director Tom Snedden.

19 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: Very good.
20 If all of you would raise your right hand.

21 (All testifiers were sworn in by
22 Chairman Saylor and responded affirmatively).

23 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: Thank you.

24 Mr. Secretary, we'll start off right
25 away with questions. And the first person to ask

1 questions here will be Representative Jonathan
2 Fritz.

3 REPRESENTATIVE FRITZ: Thank you,
4 Mr. Chairman.

5 And thank you, Mr. Secretary, for
6 joining us today. Mr. Secretary, we're going to
7 talk about seniors and vaccines. And my question
8 here is multi-pronged, so if we could keep our
9 answers as concise as possible, that would be
10 appreciated.

11 Mr. Secretary, a few weeks ago we
12 expanded Group 1A to include seniors 65 and older.
13 We expanded Group 1A without having already
14 vaccinated the designees that were in the original
15 1A category. And, as a result, these are my words,
16 it created a clumsy overlap.

17 Mr. Secretary, can you tell us, were you
18 consulted when the Administration decided to expand
19 the 1A category?

20 SECRETARY TORRES: No, sir. That
21 decision was made by the Department of Health after
22 the CDC had revised its guidance. What I can tell
23 you is that, 88 percent of the individuals who have
24 passed away from COVID are over the age of 65. And
25 the Governor wanted to make sure any of the

1 individuals 65 and older, all with underlying
2 medical conditions, at least had the opportunity to
3 seek the vaccine, if they were able to do so.

4 REPRESENTATIVE FRITZ: If you were to
5 grade yourself on success, what grade would you
6 give yourself?

7 SECRETARY TORRES: Excuse me? Can you
8 repeat that question?

9 REPRESENTATIVE FRITZ: If you're going
10 to grade your level of success, what would you give
11 yourself as a grade?

12 SECRETARY TORRES: Well, speaking for
13 the Department of Aging, we've been doing a
14 tremendous amount of work supporting older adults
15 throughout this pandemic, including, making sure
16 that their basic needs are being met in terms of
17 meals, making sure that they're not -- they're not
18 suffering from social isolation. So we've done a
19 lot of good work that I'm anxious to speak with
20 this committee about and share that with you.

21 I would grade our efforts at the
22 Department of Aging high.

23 REPRESENTATIVE FRITZ: Okay, Mr.
24 Secretary, I'm going to advance here.

25 In a recent press conference you said

1 that the department and Triple A's have or will be
2 assisting seniors in scheduling vaccination
3 appointments. Can you explain how that scheduling
4 assistance is working or will it proceed to work?

5 SECRETARY TORRES: Well, it's varying,
6 and one of the things I said at the press
7 conference, that it depends on the capacity of
8 resources at individual Area Agencies of Aging
9 because they're, you know, they vary quite a bit.
10 We have 52 different Area Agencies on Aging
11 supporting the whole Commonwealth.

12 Some have already started with local
13 partnerships in terms of vaccine planning,
14 commissions or task forces working with their
15 county commissioners, working with their emergency
16 management agencies and their local health care
17 organizations.

18 I highlighted Butler County because
19 that's a good example, and I wanted to show that as
20 an example of what other areas in Pennsylvania
21 could be doing; working in partnership to at least
22 get an allocation of the vaccines in their local
23 area, and then work to lessen the frustration of
24 older adults in terms of the amount of time they
25 were spending online or -- or making multiple calls

1 to try to get scheduled for a vaccine.

2 REPRESENTATIVE FRITZ: Mr. Secretary, do
3 you have department staff or do the Triple A's have
4 staff that are tasked solely with helping our
5 seniors get appointments?

6 SECRETARY TORRES: No. Again, it's
7 gonna vary by individual Area Agencies on Aging.
8 You know, they all support older adults. None of
9 them are going to turn away older adults who need
10 help.

11 So, I wouldn't say that they have
12 dedicated staff. I think everyone is working as
13 much as possible to support seniors here. We set
14 up a six-person unit in our PACE Program because of
15 the traffic that we saw coming in. Director
16 Snedden can speak to that. He saw a need. We have
17 a six-person unit that's dedicated to helping PACE
18 enrollees as much as we can with the vaccine and
19 any supplemental support that they need, like,
20 transportation.

21 We also have a PA Link to our -- which
22 is a program to support individuals with
23 disability, the PA Link to aging and disability
24 resources, and we are working to mobilize that
25 group as well, to support older adults or

1 individuals with disability that need help.

2 REPRESENTATIVE FRITZ: Mr. Secretary, I
3 want to speak to something that has cropped up in
4 my district. I have a very rural district. But I
5 have a lot of senior citizens that, believe it or
6 not, don't have a computer, so they're depending on
7 family or neighbors, other good samaritans to
8 register for them.

9 Is there a system for good samaritans,
10 like I just referenced, to schedule for folks that
11 either are their neighbor or extended family?

12 SECRETARY TORRES: Well, they can work
13 through the Department of Health website if they're
14 working online. I've spoken to AARP, for example,
15 and I know based on a recent tele-town call that
16 older adults are looking for low-tech options, and
17 that's why we're working to implement some of the
18 things that I've mentioned.

19 We're also working, from a Department of
20 Aging standpoint, to support the Area Agencies on
21 Aging. We're getting ready to ask where -- where
22 can they use some support, maybe connecting them
23 with certain partners. I just had a phone call
24 this weekend where some -- a certain county wanted
25 connections with a pharmacy locally that could,

1 potentially, at least start some discussions about
2 better coordination and collaboration at that local
3 level, and we were happy to do that.

4 Again, with the relationships we have
5 with pharmacists and health care organizations,
6 we're trying our best to support them as much as we
7 can.

8 REPRESENTATIVE FRITZ: Mr. Secretary, I
9 see our time is up. I'm just gonna end on this. I
10 would advocate that, perhaps, your department put
11 out guidance to help good samaritans in assisting
12 their neighbors and their loved ones.

13 Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

14 SECRETARY TORRES: Thank you.

15 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR:
16 Representative Bullock.

17 REPRESENTATIVE BULLOCK: Thank you,
18 Mr. Chairman.

19 Good afternoon, Mr. Secretary. Thank
20 you for being here today.

21 SECRETARY TORRES: Good afternoon.

22 REPRESENTATIVE BULLOCK: Can you share
23 with me how racial disparities and other social
24 determinants impact the access to health care,
25 retirement age and retirement income for seniors in

1 Pennsylvania?

2 SECRETARY TORRES: Well, this pandemic
3 has magnified health disparities of seniors in
4 Pennsylvania, and that's something we're very
5 sensitive to. I have been working with the
6 Governor's Affinity Commission, the Women's
7 Commission, the Latino, African-American, Asian
8 Pacific Island, and the LGBTQ Affairs.

9 So, we've been very sensitive to the
10 needs of diverse communities, to the issues of
11 health disparities, again, that got magnified
12 throughout this pandemic and continues to be an
13 issue. And we're working with those different
14 communities -- commissions and communities to make
15 sure that any information that we're putting out
16 we're being effective in our outreach and being
17 responsive in the services that we're providing.

18 REPRESENTATIVE BULLOCK: Can you share
19 any of the lessons that you learned during this
20 pandemic that we can continue post pandemic? And
21 as we work through our economic recovery, what
22 investments should we make to close those racial
23 disparities?

24 SECRETARY TORRES: Well, we need to work
25 with trusted partners in our communities, that's

1 one thing, especially when you're talking about an
2 episode that we're living through now with pandemic
3 and vaccines.

4 In the African-America community, I know
5 there's a lot of distrust, for a lot of historical
6 reasons, but distrust of, you know, taking a
7 vaccine that is fairly new. Sometimes that's
8 distrust of government, and so, we have to work
9 through a lot of those. And part of what we're
10 doing here is establishing partnerships and
11 collaborations at the local level with
12 organizations that we can work with to get good
13 information into the community and to address any
14 questions or concerns that they might have.

15 REPRESENTATIVE BULLOCK: Thank you.

16 I do realize that the cost to those
17 seniors, the cost to their health care, cost to
18 their housing insecurity and food insecurity is a
19 cost to the Commonwealth. So I appreciate your
20 efforts in that way.

21 Can you also share with me the work that
22 you have done within your own department to address
23 racial inequity when it comes to employment and
24 other investments in your workforce?

25 SECRETARY TORRES: Sure. We are a small

1 department, as you know, but we currently have,
2 14 percent of our staff is diverse, and we have
3 done a lot of work. In fact, considering the issue
4 we just spoke about, health disparities, our whole
5 department has been trained on unconscious bias.

6 We've taken -- Our whole department has
7 been trained by SAGECare on issues related to LGBTQ
8 seniors, so we're doing what we can working within
9 our department across the whole Administration.
10 The Governor is very committed to this issue of
11 inequities and historical discriminations that
12 impact service provisions of anyone, really. But,
13 in our case we're considering those issues as it
14 relates to older adults and what we could do to
15 improve, again, service delivery and outreach.

16 REPRESENTATIVE BULLOCK: Did I hear you
17 say, you said 14 percent of your staff is diverse?

18 SECRETARY TORRES: Yes.

19 REPRESENTATIVE BULLOCK: And what do you
20 -- what demographics do you include in the term
21 diverse?

22 SECRETARY TORRES: African-American,
23 Latinos and Asian.

24 REPRESENTATIVE BULLOCK: Thank you very
25 much. I have no further questions.

1 SECRETARY TORRES: Thank you.

2 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR:

3 Representative Struzzi.

4 REPRESENTATIVE STRUZZI: Thank you, Mr.
5 Chairman. Good afternoon.

6 SECRETARY TORRES: Good afternoon.

7 REPRESENTATIVE STRUZZI: I'd like to
8 continue on the vaccination questioning. I know
9 that Representative Fritz covered a lot of the good
10 subject matter very well.

11 But, I'd like to know, and as you said,
12 88 percent of those people who succumbed to COVID
13 are over age 65. Do you have a number or an idea
14 of where we are as far as vaccinating all
15 Pennsylvania residents over age 65?

16 SECRETARY TORRES: I do not have that
17 with me at this time, no.

18 REPRESENTATIVE STRUZZI: Okay. It's
19 clearly one of the top issues that we receive from
20 our constituents in the office. There's a lot of
21 frustration.

22 I have Indiana County, which is a mix of
23 rural and small urban areas, and there are very few
24 vaccination sites, and the supply, which I
25 understand is not in our control, but a lot of

1 frustration with the supply; a lot of questions
2 from seniors on how do I get it, where do I get it,
3 and how do I register? I would encourage you to do
4 everything you can to help our local Area Agencies
5 on Aging to provide enough information to make sure
6 that seniors aren't frustrated to the point of, you
7 know, desperation and things like that.

8 But my question -- And I'm hoping you
9 can provide some insight on this, and this came
10 directly to me from a constituent, is, how do you
11 address seniors that can't get out to a senior
12 center or to a pharmacy or to an area where they
13 can be vaccinated? What if they are at home, want
14 to get the vaccine but can't?

15 SECRETARY TORRES: Well, again, the
16 press conference that I held with the Governor last
17 Thursday, I focused on Butler County because they
18 had already worked on, with a local health care
19 organization, to vaccinate seniors at a high-rise
20 apartment building. And I know other Area Agencies
21 on Aging are having those kinds of discussions.

22 So, what I'm trying do from my position
23 is to try and be less reactive, and I've spoken to
24 the whole Triple A network. We meet every Monday
25 morning for a half hour just to check in. So I'm

1 about to share information with them, they're able
2 to share what's happening out locally in their
3 areas, and we put our heads together to see what we
4 could be doing differently.

5 So, I could tell you most of the Area
6 Agencies on Aging are working to be more proactive.
7 Obviously, resource are a concern in terms of
8 having the capacity to handle a lot of traffic.
9 But I think those kinds of ideas of planning to do
10 mass vaccination sites, planning to go to senior
11 high-rises or apartment complexes, those
12 discussions are actively taking place, with the
13 hope that when we get a steady increase, reliable
14 stream of vaccines coming in, we'll -- we'll be in
15 good shape to move quickly to get some of these
16 needs met.

17 REPRESENTATIVE STRUZZI: Thank you for
18 your efforts. I encourage you to work closely with
19 the Department of Health to make sure that advanced
20 notification can be given when the vaccine is
21 available so that these vaccinations can be
22 scheduled, because that's also a level of
23 frustration that I hope we can address here in the
24 near future is that advanced notification of when
25 people can go where to get the vaccination. So,

1 thanks for your efforts.

2 SECRETARY TORRES: Thank you, sir.

3 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR:

4 Representative Fiedler.

5 REPRESENTATIVE FIEDLER: Thank you.

6 Since the start of the COVID-19
7 pandemic, there have been over 11,000 deaths in
8 nursing homes, and our state has been at points
9 ranked fourth worst in COVID response across the
10 entire country. Obviously, all of us mourn the
11 loss of parents, siblings, aunts and uncles.

12 This pandemic has laid bare, I think,
13 the workforce staffing crisis in our nursing homes
14 and demonstrates that funding for nursing homes is,
15 at times, failing to reach the bedside where it is
16 needed the most for our seniors.

17 I'd like to ask, what is the Department
18 of Aging's plan to collaborate with the Department
19 of Health and the Department of Human Services to
20 ensure that there is adequate staffing to provide
21 care for our seniors, and that that money goes to
22 our nursing homes and is being utilized for bedside
23 care?

24 SECRETARY TORRES: I want to assure you
25 that we will totally coordinate with the Department

1 of Health and the Department of Human Services.
2 Our long-term care ombudsman who advocates on
3 behalf of residents and their families in long-term
4 care settings have been on the ground through the
5 RIKBY (phonetic) program working with -- in
6 long-term care facilities, especially those
7 facilities that had large COVID-19 outbreaks.

8 Anything that -- that the long-term care
9 Ombudsman was observing out in the field was being
10 relayed back to me and, you know, we have routine
11 opportunities to discuss it, our observations with
12 the Department of Health and the Department of
13 Human Services.

14 I can assure you that anything we're
15 observing from a resident/family perspective, we
16 are coordinating and sharing that with the
17 Department of Health and Department of Human
18 Services, as appropriate.

19 REPRESENTATIVE FIEDLER: Thank you for
20 that. Obviously, we are about a year into this
21 pandemic and it will go on for some time. Can you
22 talk about the ways in which you plan to continue
23 to communicate with these departments going forward
24 as we head, hopefully, into a slightly different
25 phase of this pandemic in which, hopefully, many

1 people are vaccinated?

2 SECRETARY TORRES: Well, we're doing
3 that now on a weekly basis. As I receive
4 information, for example, from Area Agencies on
5 Aging, I coordinate with the Department of Health
6 to see if there's information they can share with
7 me that I can relay back, or if there's new
8 information in terms of advanced planning that we
9 can work on together to try and get ahead of where
10 we're at right now in terms of planning and being
11 able to get individuals vaccinated as quickly as
12 possible.

13 There's no question the limited supply
14 has really been a hindrance, but I think if we
15 could focus on getting older adults scheduled and
16 preparing for when that increase flow comes in, I
17 think we all will be better off.

18 But I can assure you, we're having
19 weekly, or as needed, even daily conversations as
20 issues come up that need to be addressed.

21 REPRESENTATIVE FIEDLER: As far as
22 staffing numbers and the bedside care that's being
23 provided, do you feel -- how do you feel it is
24 right now? Do you feel it's adequate? Do you feel
25 like it's in need of additional funding?

1 SECRETARY TORRES: Well, during the --
2 Throughout this pandemic, staffing at long-term
3 care has been a challenge. That's why we had the
4 regional health care program with the National
5 Guards, with the different health care systems that
6 partnered and collaborated, and our long-term
7 Ombudsmen were there also to support families and
8 residents during these outbreaks.

9 So, there's no question there were
10 significant challenges throughout the pandemic with
11 staff being sick, having to quarantine, and we did
12 our best as an Administration to support those
13 long-term care facilities that needed help,
14 especially when there was an outbreak. But it's a
15 valid concern and something we need to pay
16 attention to.

17 REPRESENTATIVE FIEDLER: Thank you. I
18 would definitely encourage an increase focused both
19 on the residents and also on the staff. Thank you.

20 SECRETARY TORRES: You're welcome.

21 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR:
22 Representative Schroeder.

23 REPRESENTATIVE SCHROEDER: Thank you,
24 Chairman.

25 Secretary Torres, thanks for being here.

1 I just want to expand on some of my colleagues'
2 questionings regarding vaccine distribution.

3 So, we are seeing many seniors who are
4 frustrated and desperately trying to find a
5 vaccine. And many seniors who live in 55 and older
6 developments and some living facilities need a
7 vaccine, it's almost like we're creating a Hunger
8 Game scenario out there.

9 I was wondering, you know, we've been
10 trying to think creative outside-of-the box ways to
11 find a solution to getting people vaccinated in
12 this age group. Would a mobile site be something
13 that you think is probable for seniors due to the
14 concerns of traveling and being exposed to virus
15 going out and about in the community?

16 SECRETARY TORRES: I can tell you that's
17 one of the ideas that are being floated around
18 locally. In fact, Butler County, in conversations
19 that I had with them, have an auto option facility
20 with, like, 15 auto bays, so they were bringing
21 that up, similar concept. How can we have a -- You
22 know, can we set ourselves up to do a drive-by
23 vaccination?

24 So, that kind of thinking is being
25 considered at the local level. I saw this morning

1 on the news, Lancaster is considering an empty
2 department store for a mass vaccination site.
3 Again, once the flow of vaccines come through and
4 there's enough so that we can adequately plan for
5 an event of that nature. So, a lot of discussions
6 and planning are taking place with those types of
7 ideas in mind.

8 REPRESENTATIVE SCHROEDER: Or really,
9 the quantity issue, too. I understand that. Thank
10 you. So, kind of to switch gears a little bit.

11 I saw in your testimony you had
12 mentioned about Alzheimer's, and, specifically,
13 Alzheimer's and dementia diagnosis numbers, I
14 believe, are definitely going up and, actually, the
15 severity of their diagnosis are increasing.

16 So, with quarantine and isolation and
17 loneliness, do you see that? And what have you
18 heard on that front with the mental health crisis
19 that we're dealing with during the pandemic?

20 SECRETARY TORRES: Unfortunately,
21 individuals with dementia, especially with the lack
22 of visitations, we are having a rough time, because
23 they're used to stability and routine. So, the
24 lack of visitation and restrictions during the
25 pandemic has been very challenging for individuals

1 with dementia and their families.

2 REPRESENTATIVE SCHROEDER: What do you
3 think the long-term effect is going to be for us,
4 for Pennsylvania?

5 SECRETARY TORRES: Well, we're doing a
6 lot of work in terms of, we have an Alzheimer's
7 Disease and Related Disorder Task Force. We have a
8 plan that was developed a few years ago. Over the
9 last two years I'm really proud of the task force.

10 There are 15 members that are very
11 engaged. We partnered with the health care -- the
12 Jewish Health Care Foundation out in western
13 Pennsylvania, and they've been doing a lot of -- a
14 lot of the Dementia Friends Training and Dementia
15 Champions, which are individuals who become
16 trainers in their local areas.

17 So, we have been working to get
18 champions in every county. So far, we have like 42
19 counties that have champions, and we have nearly
20 5,600 individuals training throughout Pennsylvania,
21 who have taken this dementia friendly workshop
22 either online or through instructor sessions. So
23 we've been doing a lot of really good work to make
24 Pennsylvania more dementia friendly and to support
25 individuals and their families living with any

1 dementia.

2 REPRESENTATIVE SCHROEDER: And, I guess,
3 with them being isolated at home and maybe not
4 leaving for doctor appointments and things, are you
5 seeing that they're being treated and not -- or
6 diagnosing -- what we typically are diagnosing
7 every year? Do you think anyone is falling under
8 the cracks here -- through the cracks?

9 SECRETARY TORRES: Yeah, I don't have
10 that level of information in terms of specifics
11 related to what you're asking right now.

12 REPRESENTATIVE SCHROEDER: Okay. Thank
13 you very much. I appreciate that.

14 Thank you, Chairman.

15 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR:
16 Representative Krueger.

17 Representative, if you would take your
18 name tag with you, please, thank you.

19 REPRESENTATIVE KRUEGER: Thank you,
20 Mr. Chairman.

21 Thank you, Secretary, so much for
22 joining us here today. I've appreciated your
23 answers to the questions on COVID vaccines because,
24 like so many of my colleagues, the questions we're
25 getting from seniors in my district office right

1 now are mainly about how to schedule an
2 appointment. And while I know that's under the
3 purview of the Department of Health and not the
4 Department of Aging, I would urge you and your
5 staff to do everything you can to make sure that
6 our seniors are getting first in line for those
7 important doses.

8 The question that I have for you today,
9 though, has to do with the Older Adult Financial
10 Exploitation Task Force. Before the pandemic, I
11 believe the last event that we held in person in my
12 district was an educational session with our
13 district attorney for seniors in our community in
14 Delaware County about financial exploitation.

15 And I have heard heartbreaking stories
16 of folks who somehow got scammed and lost
17 significant amounts of money because they thought
18 they were helping a grandchild or somebody else.

19 So, can you bring us up to speed on
20 what's happening with the Older Adult Financial
21 Exploitation Task Force?

22 SECRETARY TORRES: Sure. I'd be happy
23 to. That task force was a recommendation that came
24 out of a study that we did and we released back in
25 September of 2020, and we were directed by the

1 Governor, through his executive order on protecting
2 vulnerable populations to conduct that study to see
3 what the impact of financial exploitation of older
4 adults was in Pennsylvania and what the impact is
5 to the Commonwealth.

6 So, we -- You know, we issued our
7 findings. We worked with an inner agency work
8 group just to see what are the barriers to sharing
9 information; to being able to proactively do more
10 than we've been doing to prevent or mitigate
11 exploitation of older adults.

12 The task force is basically that group
13 of in -- agencies that are working together, and we
14 added private sector representatives. So we have
15 representatives from law enforcement, from health
16 care, from aging stakeholders, the judiciary, and
17 from the financial services sector.
18 We've had two meetings. We have our third meeting
19 next week.

20 We've had over 50 individuals
21 participating with a goal of coming up with
22 recommendations, concrete, practical
23 recommendations that we can -- we can implement to
24 try to stem the tide of financial exploitation.
25 I'll give you one quick example.

1 We had a lady whose grandmother was
2 scammed out of hundreds of thousands of dollars.
3 And if you look at the findings that we came up,
4 most of the perpetrators are family members. In
5 this case, it was an uncle that stole hundreds of
6 thousands, probably close to a million dollars off
7 the grandmother because he cashed in a life
8 insurance policy.

9 The problem here was, you have two
10 powers of attorney, and it was one uncle that
11 managed everything. There were various steps along
12 the way that somebody could have intervened, either
13 the bank, the nursing home. If some questions
14 would have been raised, then the other power of
15 attorney would have come in, perhaps, the damages
16 could have been -- could have been mitigated there.

17 So, try and look at what advice do we
18 give people, for example, that have early dementia,
19 you know, if you're diagnosed with early dementia,
20 are people being advised by a health care
21 professional to save their assets and resources so
22 that they don't lose it and then become dependent
23 on the state.

24 So, I'm hoping to have recommendations
25 by the end of April, which would be our fifth

1 meeting.

2 REPRESENTATIVE KRUEGER: And can you
3 tell us, I know that other forms of fraud and abuse
4 have really increased during this pandemic,
5 unemployment compensation fraud, for example, and
6 folks who are now getting tax returns for benefits
7 they never actually were eligible for.

8 Have we seen an increase in financial
9 exploitation of seniors during the pandemic?

10 SECRETARY TORRES: There's been an
11 increase over the past several years of financial
12 exploitation. There was a lot of COVID-related
13 scams, and even scams related to the vaccine that
14 we have to be careful about. So yes, you're
15 absolutely right.

16 You know, these scams, it seems like
17 every time we have a situation like we're dealing
18 with now, these bad actors come out trying to see
19 how they can take advantage of individuals,
20 particularly older adults who are more vulnerable,
21 typically, than other individuals.

22 REPRESENTATIVE KRUEGER: And vaccine
23 scams, that's concerning because, again, we know
24 that seniors are one of the groups that are most
25 likely to die from COVID if they contract it. What

1 kind of vaccine scams are we tracking in
2 Pennsylvania right now?

3 SECRETARY TORRES: Well, I haven't
4 tracked any directly. But, we work with the
5 Attorney General's Office. I know they are
6 constantly warning the public about scams. People
7 calling up and saying, we can get you scheduled,
8 trying to get money for it. Those are the things
9 that older adults need to be worried about and
10 vigilant.

11 REPRESENTATIVE KRUEGER: Thank you, Mr.
12 Secretary.

13 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

14 SECRETARY TORRES: Thank you.

15 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR:
16 Representative Rosemary Brown.

17 REPRESENTATIVE R. BROWN: Thank you,
18 Mr. Chairman.

19 Thank you, Mr. Secretary. Sort of
20 continuing on that conversation of protecting our
21 seniors.

22 The most recent Older Adult Protective
23 Services Annual Report for '19 to '20, 2020, shows
24 the RONS, which are the Reports of Need, as you
25 know, which are allegations of abuse, they

1 increased by over 80 percent over the past five
2 years. So, to address this need, the 2018 and '19
3 budget and the 2019-20 budget added a combined
4 total of 5 million to the PennCare appropriation
5 for increased protective services, which was
6 roughly a 5-fold increase over the \$902,000 shown
7 as actual expenditures for protective services back
8 in 2017 and '18.

9 Some of your appropriation hearing
10 materials reflects the actual expenditures for
11 protective services in 2019 and '20 of 6 point --
12 almost \$8 million. Is that an accurate number?

13 (Pause).

14 REPRESENTATIVE R. BROWN: I believe it's
15 on page 20 of your hearing materials.

16 SECRETARY TORRES: Yeah, I'm going to
17 ask my deputy secretary, Steve.

18 DEPUTY SECRETARY HORNER: Yes, that's
19 correct.

20 SECRETARY TORRES: Okay. Thank you.

21 REPRESENTATIVE KRUEGER: So, for the
22 actual expenditures, once again, for protective
23 services in 2019-20 budget, 6.764 million, that's
24 an accurate number. Thank you.

25 The appropriation hearing materials also

1 show available and budget expenditures for
2 protective services in 2020 to '21 and 2021 to '22
3 of \$5.9 million. Why is there a 13 percent
4 decrease from the 2019-20 budget when, actually,
5 the 2019-20 Older Protective Services Annual
6 Report, which I mentioned in the beginning,
7 indicates there's a need for services to continue
8 to increase? So, why is there a 13 percent
9 decrease when the need is showing to increase?

10 SECRETARY TORRES: I'm sorry. Which
11 line item was that again that you're --

12 REPRESENTATIVE R. BROWN: I'm looking at
13 the 2019-20 budget. I'm looking from the budget
14 expenditures, the hearing materials that you gave
15 us show the budget expenditures for protective
16 services for the '20-21 and the '21-22 budget of
17 5.9 million. That shows a 13 percent decrease from
18 2019 and '20. But yet, the older services -- Older
19 Protective Services Report indicates there's a need
20 for an increase.

21 DEPUTY SECRETARY HORNER: I can help
22 with that, Secretary.

23 SECRETARY TORRES: Okay. Go ahead,
24 Steve.

25 DEPUTY SECRETARY HORNER: Sure. There

1 looks -- there's a decrease because of the
2 attendant care patient fees, but the actual for
3 protective service did not -- that is not -- that
4 did not go down. So it looks like it did go down,
5 but it's actually -- because of the attendant care
6 dollars that went down, that's why that line item
7 looks decreased.

8 REPRESENTATIVE R. BROWN: So when you
9 say attendant care dollars --

10 DEPUTY SECRETARY HORNER: Yes, attendant
11 care patient fees.

12 REPRESENTATIVE R. BROWN: Yeah. I'm
13 talking about protective services. Are we on the
14 same page here?

15 DEPUTY SECRETARY HORNER: Yeah. It's in
16 the PennCare budget piece. There's two components,
17 the attendant care and adult protective services.

18 REPRESENTATIVE R. BROWN: Yeah, and I'm
19 asking -- I'm asking specifically about protective
20 services.

21 DEPUTY SECRETARY HORNER: Correct.
22 Protective service amount did not go down.

23 REPRESENTATIVE R. BROWN: So, it does
24 show that the actual for 2019-20, 7.2, and the
25 available for '20-21, 5.9, and the budget request

1 is 5.9.

2 REPRESENTATIVE R. BROWN: So, I'm just,
3 you know, when you look at that flatness there and
4 you look at the increase, there's an increase in
5 service needs.

6 DEPUTY SECRETARY HORNER: Yes.

7 REPRESENTATIVE R. BROWN: Well --

8 SECRETARY TORRES: If you'll allow us,
9 we'll get back to you on that --

10 REPRESENTATIVE R. BROWN: Yeah.

11 SECRETARY TORRES: -- just to clarify.

12 But Steve is correct. You initially
13 mentioned that, you know, we got over the previous
14 two years approximately 5 million to support
15 protective services, and that -- that was not
16 decrease. It should be --

17 REPRESENTATIVE R. BROWN: If you can
18 provide us some clarification on that, I think
19 there's some need.

20 I'd like clarification, because I am out
21 of time, on the elders right protection
22 appropriation money, that we have not utilized some
23 of those additional funds. I'd like to know why
24 they are not being spent. It's showing that no
25 state dollars right now at this time. There's no

1 match for that. So I'm kind of curious why we're
2 not using those federal dollars as well.

3 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

4 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR:

5 Representative Kinkead.

6 REPRESENTATIVE KINKEAD: Thank you,
7 Mr. Chairman.

8 Mr. Secretary, what is the department
9 doing to address the social isolation that is
10 particularly impacting older adults now more than
11 ever?

12 SECRETARY TORRES: Sure. We've been
13 doing a lot of work. Actually, our Pennsylvania
14 Council on Aging was working on social isolation as
15 a priority before the pandemic, and they really
16 stepped up their efforts, including early on in the
17 pandemic, issuing a survey that got 3,700 responses
18 throughout Pennsylvania to see how older adults
19 were faring. We used that survey to inform some of
20 our thinking.

21 We also, our long-term care ombudsman,
22 we partnered with AARP who provided some funding,
23 and we provided over a hundred cell phones and
24 tablets to about 49 different long-term care
25 facilities in 37 counties so that older adults,

1 residents, would have more opportunities to connect
2 with their families and their loved ones. We
3 received testimony -- very positive testimony from
4 residents that were able to take advantage of those
5 extra amenities. We partnered with Slippery Rock
6 University.

7 Some of you in the west may have seen
8 some very positive press recently, including an
9 editorial from the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette that
10 highlighted a program we started last -- last
11 semester, and it's continuing this semester with
12 even more students, where we're matching up older
13 adults with students who are students of
14 recreational therapy at Slippery Rock and taking
15 classes related to aging within their curriculum.

16 So, we all saw our long-term care
17 ombudsman, since they've been restricted from going
18 into long-term care settings, have purchased
19 Padbots with some of the CARES funding that we
20 received. These are basically small robots with an
21 iPad that they navigate into a long-term care
22 facility, and they can go directly to a resident
23 and engage privately and directly to them -- with
24 them with videoconferencing.

25 So, I'm really proud of the work that

1 the Pennsylvania Council on Aging, the Area
2 Agencies on Aging, and our department staff have
3 done because of the concerns that we've had early
4 on related to the health and well-being of older
5 adults and the impact of sociali -- social
6 isolation throughout this pandemic.

7 REPRESENTATIVE KINKEAD: Thank you,
8 Mr. Secretary. And much focus of our focus today
9 has been on the pandemic, and rightly so. But,
10 support for our seniors extends beyond the
11 immediate need.

12 I'm wondering what the department is
13 doing to continue and expand its support of senior
14 centers, and to ensure that those critical
15 community supports are still available and survive
16 after the pandemic?

17 SECRETARY TORRES: Yeah. Unfortunately,
18 95 percent of our senior centers have been closed
19 and many remain closed.

20 What we've done -- What we did this
21 year, every year we get an allocation of \$2 million
22 to support senior community center grants, and
23 these are typically competitive grants because,
24 sometimes, senior centers will come in and they'll
25 have a capital need to improve their senior center

1 to make sure the seniors who are participating are
2 safe and there's no health- related issues with the
3 facilities. Those are a little bit higher-priced
4 items in terms of a grant.

5 But this year, because of the pandemic,
6 because so many of them are closed, we decided to
7 basically take the \$2 million and split it evenly
8 among eligible senior centers so they could use it
9 for administrative expenses, they could use it to
10 purchase supplies or equipment; anything that they
11 might need to prepare to bring seniors back in.

12 So, we're very sensitive to the fact
13 that, you know, senior centers that are an integral
14 part of seniors being able to participate and
15 engage socially and receive education and wellness
16 programs are a big part of what we need to support
17 in the communities, especially after this pandemic
18 is -- is over.

19 REPRESENTATIVE KINKEAD: Right. Thank
20 you, Mr. Secretary.

21 Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield my
22 time.

23 SECRETARY TORRES: You're welcome.

24 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR:

25 Representative James.

1 REPRESENTATIVE JAMES: Thank you,
2 Mr. Chairman.

3 Good afternoon, Secretary Torres.

4 SECRETARY TORRES: Good afternoon.

5 REPRESENTATIVE JAMES: I want to switch
6 gears for a moment and talk about the Area Agency
7 on Aging, locations, and the services there, if I
8 may.

9 Last year you commented, at the time you
10 had nine Triple A's scored as red. I think what
11 you're doing is like a traffic signal, red, yellow
12 and green. How many of those nine agencies, the
13 red agencies, have gotten themselves out of the red
14 zone?

15 SECRETARY TORRES: Well, we currently
16 have six, so that would be three. But again, we do
17 ongoing monitoring, so I don't know -- I would have
18 to look to see which, you know, how many are still
19 in the red from the prior monitoring session.

20 REPRESENTATIVE JAMES: Okay. So, about
21 how many are in yellow and about how many are in
22 registered green, roughly?

23 SECRETARY TORRES: Yes. Six in red as
24 of early January, 10 in yellow, and 36 in green.

25 And we, you know, to add more context,

1 we provide a lot of technical assistance. We're
2 working with, obviously, the ones that are in red
3 to make sure that they're getting back to where
4 they need to be performance-wise. So that's an
5 ongoing process for us in terms of working with the
6 Area Agencies on Aging that needs some support.

7 REPRESENTATIVE JAMES: I believe last
8 year, part of the issue with the red designations
9 was staff turnover. Have you been able to deal
10 with that?

11 SECRETARY TORRES: Well, again, that's a
12 -- that's a local -- that's up to the local Area
13 Agencies on Aging. They're required to maintain
14 staffing at a level where they can manage the
15 cases. We do monitor that when we go out and
16 perform these -- these oversight visits.

17 Those are the kinds of things we'll
18 discuss with them in terms of, you're understaffed
19 or we believe you're understaffed based on the
20 caseload -- the individual caseloads.

21 REPRESENTATIVE JAMES: So, there was one
22 disturbing comment, I think, I wanted to point out
23 in your report, is that, it's possible that some of
24 the agencies might be imposed a financial penalty
25 if they were blatant and disregarded your

1 instructions.

2 I'm wondering, what would motivate,
3 number 1, the general manager of a Triple A not to
4 try to comply with your requests or directives?

5 And number 2, don't you believe, or at
6 least I believe in the carrot-and-stick routine,
7 that there must be some way to motivate somebody to
8 do the right thing as opposed to fining them when
9 they're probably running short of money, anyway?

10 SECRETARY TORRES: Yeah. I'm not
11 exactly sure what you're referencing in terms of
12 the comment. But, we -- you know, we receive
13 federal dollars, and we have state statutes and
14 regulations that pretty much spell out what's
15 expected performance-wise. You know, that's why
16 we're monitoring. That's why we're trying to
17 provide technical assistance.

18 We've -- You know, we've put together a
19 quality assurance report to make sure -- to help
20 Area Agencies on Aging. So, I don't necessarily
21 approach issues with a stick. If there's a
22 situation that requires that is because, perhaps,
23 either the attempts of remediations are, you know,
24 are not succeeding or there are some other issues.

25 But, again, for the most part, I work

1 very collaboratively with the Area Agencies on
2 Aging.

3 REPRESENTATIVE JAMES: Let me compliment
4 you. Last week when the announcement came out with
5 a phone number of some of the local areas --

6 I come from a rural western Pennsylvania
7 district. It was the very next day I was in a
8 pharmacy, and the pharmacist asked me specifically
9 what could he do or what could we do to help
10 seniors who don't have computers and lack
11 transportation. And I said, aha. I have just the
12 thing for you. I shared the phone number, and he
13 thanked me very much. So, some of the ideas are
14 working very well, and I appreciate those.

15 I think I'll end on that high note. I
16 had one more question, but I'll cede back my time.
17 Thank you very much.

18 SECRETARY TORRES: Thank you.

19 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: You can't
20 cede back time you don't have.

21 With that, we'll recognize
22 Representative Linda Culver.

23 REPRESENTATIVE SCHLEGEL-CULVER: Thank
24 you, Mr. Chairman.

25 And thank you, Secretary Torres, for

1 taking our questions.

2 SECRETARY TORRES: You're welcome.

3 REPRESENTATIVE SCHLEGEL-CULVER: I want
4 to talk a little bit about PennCare. It's my
5 understanding that the appropriation covers all 52
6 Areas Agencies on Aging for the Administration and
7 to provide these critical services: Home and
8 community-based services, home-delivered and
9 congregate meals, home health, personal care,
10 senior centers, information and referral, passenger
11 transportation, attendant care, adult daily living,
12 home support, and protective services.

13 So my question to you is, that's quite a
14 hefty list. Those are critical services. It's
15 keeping people in their own homes. It's keeping
16 them safe, and it's keeping them healthy.

17 So my question is, is there a waiting
18 list for the option services?

19 SECRETARY TORRES: Yes, there is a
20 waiting list. And, historically, we've -- we
21 always have a waiting list because I think it's
22 important for everybody to recognize that we just
23 completed our four-year state plan on aging.

24 Over 3 million individuals in
25 Pennsylvania are over the age of 60, and that's

1 25 percent of our population. And that's projected
2 to grow over the next nine years to 4 million, or
3 nearly one in three Pennsylvanians. So, there's
4 always going to be this demand for services.

5 We do have a waiting list. It's
6 currently 3,344 individuals. But what I want to
7 point out is that, it doesn't mean that those three
8 plus thousand individuals are waiting -- have no
9 services that they -- that they're using. Most of
10 them -- over half of them have one service, but
11 there might be other services that they're in need
12 of and they're waiting for.

13 REPRESENTATIVE SCHLEGEL-CULVER: Is that
14 number as of the end of last year?

15 SECRETARY TORRES: That's correct.
16 That's as the end of December, 3,344.

17 REPRESENTATIVE SCHLEGEL-CULVER: So, do
18 we anticipate a large jump this year just because
19 we've had the year of COVID? We've had so many
20 seniors that have been shut in and not getting
21 their normal activities and the normal stimulation
22 they would normally get?

23 SECRETARY TORRES: Well, you're right.
24 The need did go up because of COVID since everybody
25 was shut in. But, actually, since the beginning of

1 2020 -- at the beginning of 2020, we were over
2 4,000. So we were able to reduce -- Using federal
3 funding from the supplemental COVID relief bills,
4 we were able to reduce it 19 percent.

5 REPRESENTATIVE SCHLEGEL-CULVER: Do all
6 52 agencies have a waiting list, or are there some
7 that don't?

8 SECRETARY TORRES: There are some that
9 don't, but most of them do.

10 DEPUTY SECRETARY HORNER: There's 40 --
11 40 that have a waiting list.

12 SECRETARY TORRES: Thank you, Steve.

13 REPRESENTATIVE SCHLEGEL-CULVER: Okay.

14 So, it's my understanding that the
15 Lottery Fund is projected to have an ending balance
16 of about \$4 million, and an additional 75 million
17 in reserve. So, why are we not using some of those
18 dollars to create some sort of an initiative to get
19 rid of the waiting list?

20 SECRETARY TORRES: Well, we actually had
21 requested, for this fiscal year, 8.1 million in the
22 previous budget request to support reducing the
23 waiting list. Unfortunately, because of the
24 pandemic and the Commonwealth's budget situation,
25 that didn't happen.

1 But, we were able to supplement our
2 funding and our needs, at least for this year, with
3 CARES funding, and we still have -- we still have
4 that funding to work with.

5 REPRESENTATIVE SCHLEGEL-CULVER: And
6 would that request get rid of the waiting list or
7 just help alleviate some of the waiting list?

8 SECRETARY TORRES: Just help alleviate
9 it, because again, these waiting lists, what
10 happens is, the individuals who get the services
11 there's always a needs assessment that's performed,
12 and each individual is scored. So the individuals
13 with the highest need get prioritized.

14 So even though you're seeing a waiting
15 list of a couple thousand, a good portion of them
16 are not -- you know, are functionally independent,
17 and they're not what I would classify as a high,
18 you know, a high need for this particular -- for
19 these particular services.

20 I mean, they're there to get services.
21 They -- Definitely, if they need in-home meals,
22 they get in-home meals. If they need in-care
23 management, which is functional assessment of their
24 capacities and capabilities. If they need adult
25 daily living services, we'll prioritize those, as

1 well as personal care services. So that's care in
2 the home to help them with their activities of
3 daily living. So --

4 REPRESENTATIVE SCHLEGEL-CULVER: All
5 right. It would just be my request that we try to
6 do better for the seniors that we have on the
7 waiting list. And I am extremely concerned about
8 what's going to come to us this coming year, just
9 given the year we just experienced.

10 But, thank you for your time today.
11 Thank you for answering my questions.

12 And thank you, Mr. Chairman.

13 SECRETARY TORRES: Thank you.

14 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR:
15 Representative Owlett.

16 REPRESENTATIVE OWLETT: All right.
17 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

18 And thank you, Secretary, for being
19 here. Just a couple quick questions for you.
20 Hopefully, we can roll through these.

21 Early on, in COVID-19, Governor Wolf
22 entered into a, kind of like a working relationship
23 with some of the surrounding states. What were
24 those states that we were in this working
25 relationship with?

1 SECRETARY TORRES: I'm not sure what
2 you're referring to, Representative.

3 REPRESENTATIVE OWLETT: Okay. So you
4 weren't included in any of those conversations with
5 some of these surrounding states like New York, New
6 Jersey? I can't remember what the other ones were.

7 SECRETARY TORRES: You may be referring
8 to the collaboration that was going on between the
9 Department of Health and -- and, you know, at the
10 Governor's level.

11 REPRESENTATIVE OWLETT: Yes. That's
12 what -- Was the Department of Aging involved in any
13 of those conversations?

14 SECRETARY TORRES: No.

15 REPRESENTATIVE OWLETT: Okay.

16 I want to talk a little bit about our
17 nursing homes and the deaths that we have seen here
18 in Pennsylvania. My colleague on the other side of
19 the aisle talked a little bit about this. Really,
20 it's just -- it's so heartbreaking.

21 In mid-March the Secretary of Health
22 issued guidances requiring nursing homes to admit
23 individuals that were tested COVID-19 positive that
24 were being discharged from hospitals back into the
25 nursing homes. I think everybody in this room

1 would have probably said, hey, that may be a
2 problem.

3 Did you have any concerns in March of
4 2020, with this guidance from the Secretary of
5 Health?

6 SECRETARY TORRES: I think what's
7 important for everyone to remember is that,
8 long-term care facilities are the homes of these
9 residents.

10 REPRESENTATIVE OWLETT: I agree with
11 you. But did you have concerns with that?

12 SECRETARY TORRES: Well, that was the
13 decision of the Secretary of Health.

14 REPRESENTATIVE OWLETT: Did the
15 Secretary of Health consult you at all in this
16 decision?

17 SECRETARY TORRES: No, sir.

18 REPRESENTATIVE OWLETT: So, they did not
19 reach out to the Department of Aging before they
20 made a decision to put COVID-19 positive patients
21 into nursing homes? They did not reach out to you?

22 SECRETARY TORRES: No. Whatever
23 decisions were being made from a public health
24 standpoint were within the Department of Health. I
25 was not --

1 REPRESENTATIVE OWLETT: Do you believe
2 the guidance resulted in a higher number of nursing
3 home deaths because of COVID-19?

4 SECRETARY TORRES: That's not a question
5 that I'm prepared to answer at this point.

6 Again, the guidance that we were given,
7 ultimately, Secretary Levine was doing her best to
8 keep everybody as safe as possible. She was
9 issuing guidance that she felt supported that.

10 REPRESENTATIVE OWLETT: I want to talk a
11 little bit about this collaborative that we were
12 working on with the Department of Health.

13 One of the states we were working with
14 was New York State. My district borders New York
15 State. A lot of the media that we get comes from
16 New York State media. And right now it's blowing
17 up up there because Governor Cuomo has really
18 hidden a lot of the numbers and misled the public
19 on these numbers.

20 What kind of -- I have folks that have
21 reached out with concerns reporting that maybe our
22 numbers are not being reported correctly. Are they
23 -- Are they right to have these same concerns?

24 SECRETARY TORRES: Representative, these
25 are -- these are really questions for the

1 Department of Health. I don't have access to those
2 numbers. Those are -- These are issues that the
3 Department of Health was monitoring, and, you know,
4 throughout this pandemic and even to the present
5 day. They are reporting numbers and being
6 transparent with their reporting. So I would defer
7 to the Department of Health on some of these
8 questions.

9 REPRESENTATIVE OWLETT: We're definitely
10 going to bring them up to the Department of Health
11 as well. But I feel like, with your involvement
12 with out nursing homes -- I mean, you were directly
13 involved with our nursing homes. It just shocks me
14 that you would not have been involved in some of
15 these conversations. And I think -- I think our
16 constituents, you know, are also shocked with this
17 as well.

18 Do you know, is this collaboration still
19 ongoing with some of these other states?

20 SECRETARY TORRES: Again, I would have
21 to defer to the Department of Health.

22 I just -- I just want to clarify. Our
23 department's role with long-term care facilities is
24 to advocate and support the residents and their
25 families. I don't have any licensing authority

1 over them--That would be Department of Health--for
2 skilled nursing facilities, and Department of Human
3 Services for assisted-living, personal care home,
4 and other intermediate care facilities.

5 So, I think your questions would be
6 better directed to both of those departments.

7 REPRESENTATIVE OWLETT: I appreciate
8 your advocacy for our seniors. We need to be
9 advocating for them, and we need to be doing that
10 in March. We need to be doing that all the time,
11 and we're doing that here today. So I appreciate
12 your time. I'm out of time.

13 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

14 SECRETARY TORRES: Thank you.

15 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR:
16 Representative Lawrence.

17 REPRESENTATIVE LAWRENCE: Thank you,
18 Mr. Chairman.

19 Mr. Secretary, the Department of Aging
20 issued a press release on March 18, 2020, at the
21 beginning of the COVID pandemic quoting you,
22 stating, quote, the Wolf Administration is
23 committed to protecting Pennsylvania's most
24 vulnerable citizens. And during this COVID-19
25 outbreak, our older adults, and especially those

1 with underlying medical conditions, are the most
2 vulnerable.

3 On that same day, the Department of
4 Health issued its not infamous guidance for nursing
5 homes stating that, quote, nursing care facilities
6 must continue to accept new admissions and receive
7 readmissions from COVID-positive patients.

8 According to the New York Times,
9 Pennsylvania is one of 10 states where over half of
10 COVID deaths are linked to nursing homes. It ranks
11 third among the 50 states in the number of COVID-
12 related nursing home deaths. Looking at the number
13 of COVID deaths in specific nursing homes, the New
14 York Times states that Pennsylvania has two of the
15 top 12 in the nation, one of which is Brighton
16 Rehab in Beaver County.

17 As you know, Congressman Conor Lamb
18 called for a federal investigation into steps taken
19 by state-appointed managers of Brighton Rehab. On
20 February 3rd, an article on TribLive entitled,
21 quote, Grand Jury Convened on Brighton Rehab,
22 details the ongoing federal investigation into what
23 happened at Brighton.

24 To my surprise, the article reports,
25 quote, the Pennsylvania Department of Aging filed a

1 Motion to Quash a subpoena served on the Beaver
2 County Office of Aging to produce documents
3 regarding complaints or investigations into
4 Brighton.

5 Now, Mr. Secretary, we all recognize
6 that we were dealing with a great deal of
7 uncertainty, particularly at the beginning of the
8 pandemic, and mistakes were made. But I want to
9 know, why is the Department of Aging, the
10 department you lead, filing a motion to halt the
11 release of documents in a federal investigation of
12 Brighton?

13 SECRETARY TORRES: Yeah.

14 Representative, it's really just a
15 procedural issue. State law does not allow us to
16 provide the kind of information that was requested
17 through a subpoena. It must be a court order, so
18 it really is just procedural. It's not that anyone
19 is trying to withhold information, you know. So
20 we're complying with state law that governs the
21 release of information that we have.

22 REPRESENTATIVE LAWRENCE: So,
23 Mr. Secretary, with due respect, I think that's
24 baloney. I'm guessing you're referring to the
25 Older Adults Protective Services Act. This act

1 says, information shall not be disclosed outside --
2 anyone outside of the agency, but it then says,
3 other than to a court or competent -- a court of
4 competent jurisdiction or pursuant to a court
5 order. We have a subpoena in this instance.

6 In the preamble of the same act, the
7 Older Adults Protective Services Act states, quote,
8 this act shall be liberally construed to assure
9 protective services to older adults in need of
10 them.

11 The whole point of the law is to protect
12 vulnerable seniors. Your own March press release
13 states that you're committed to protecting
14 vulnerable seniors. Your department can liberally
15 construe your authority, but you are not. You are
16 not protecting seniors when your department files a
17 court Motion to Quash this subpoena. Your
18 department is on the record now looking to block
19 this investigation.

20 But even if I accepted your premise, the
21 emergency declaration law allows the Governor to
22 suspend rules or regulations of any state agency
23 coping with the COVID emergency.

24 You report to the Governor. If you
25 really believe the law requires you to block the

1 release of documents to federal investigators, you
2 can ask the Governor to authorize it. But I don't
3 see that. I see you standing in the way of a
4 federal investigation into what happened at a
5 nursing home under supervision of a state-appointed
6 manager.

7 Have you spoken to the Governor about
8 this?

9 SECRETARY TORRES: No, sir. I follow
10 the advice of our counsel.

11 REPRESENTATIVE LAWRENCE: You have not
12 direct -- You report to the Governor, and you have
13 not discussed the situation at Brighton with him?
14 Is that what you're saying?

15 SECRETARY TORRES: This is a legal
16 matter, Representative. Again, I --

17 REPRESENTATIVE LAWRENCE: I'm not asking
18 anything about a legal matter. I'm asking why your
19 department filed a request to quash the subpoena.
20 I'm not asking about the underlying case.

21 SECRETARY TORRES: You're not --

22 REPRESENTATIVE LAWRENCE: I'm asking why
23 your department filed that.

24 SECRETARY TORRES: And I've answered
25 your question. We may disagree on it, but it's a

1 procedural matter. We interpret it, our
2 legislation or the rules that a subpoena was not
3 enough. We need a court order.

4 REPRESENTATIVE LAWRENCE: Mr. Secretary,
5 are you asking me to believe that the Governor and
6 his Secretary of Aging haven't talked about this
7 situation, the nursing home under federal
8 investigation with one of the highest COVID death
9 rates in the nation?

10 SECRETARY TORRES: I've discussed it
11 with our counsel. That's who I've discussed it
12 with.

13 REPRESENTATIVE LAWRENCE: My time is up.
14 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

15 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR:
16 Representative Zimmerman.

17 REPRESENTATIVE ZIMMERMAN: Thank you,
18 Mr. Chairman.

19 And thank you, Secretary, for your time
20 today.

21 So, just shifting gears a little bit,
22 what's the -- what's the percent of your
23 department's staff that's working from home; that's
24 now working out of the home rather than from the
25 office?

1 SECRETARY TORRES: About 90 percent. We
2 typically have about -- There's only about 10
3 employees that are authorized to come into the
4 office to take care of financial matters, stay on
5 top of legal matters, and to support our
6 pharmaceutical assistance benefit program.

7 REPRESENTATIVE ZIMMERMAN: So with that,
8 what kind of oversight have you put in place to
9 assure that these employees working remotely are
10 actually being productive?

11 Also with that, have you given any
12 guidance to some of the agencies that you would
13 work with as well?

14 SECRETARY TORRES: Well, I meet with my
15 management team every morning. We have been doing
16 that since the beginning of the pandemic. I know
17 the management teams are engaged with their
18 employees, so I trust that they are providing the
19 necessary supervision and oversight.

20 We've had a lot of work throughout this
21 pandemic, so I am very satisfied based on the
22 output of work that we've done and the different
23 initiatives that we have been able to get started
24 and to work on despite not being able to meet in
25 person. So I think we have, you know, very good --

1 very good production. We haven't really suffered
2 in terms of our productivity because of the
3 pandemic.

4 REPRESENTATIVE ZIMMERMAN: So, with
5 that, you believe the follow-up time has not become
6 less with constituents or even a state rep asking
7 questions?

8 SECRETARY TORRES: The follow-up time?

9 REPRESENTATIVE ZIMMERMAN: Response
10 time, phone calls, or inquiries of any type.

11 SECRETARY TORRES: Well, I mean, we --
12 we have a central line and that's being monitored.
13 We're all using what's at our disposal in terms of
14 e-mails, on our virtual meetings.

15 I can tell you -- I'll give you one
16 example that I think it's reflective of the type of
17 work we have been doing. We had a state plan on
18 aging that we had to get prepared and submit to the
19 federal government. We had to engage the
20 community. I have virtual forms that over 500
21 people participated in.

22 We had a survey that we conducted.
23 5,600 responses helped to inform the state plan on
24 aging. So, we've been managing, and in some cases
25 actually getting more engagement from, you know,

1 the public because we've done it virtually and
2 allowed people to either dial in or videoconference
3 in. But, we're keeping up with the workload and
4 trying to be as responsive as we can to older
5 adults and anybody else who needs our support.

6 REPRESENTATIVE ZIMMERMAN: Okay, good.

7 Well, just as a -- kind of to end it, so
8 with most employees being at home or working from
9 home, have you -- has your department incurred any
10 extra costs, or actually achieved some savings
11 through that?

12 SECRETARY TORRES: Well, I guess we have
13 achieved savings because we're not traveling, we're
14 not holding conferences. We typically have a lot
15 of conferences throughout the year, and we've been
16 able to do them virtually.

17 In fact, I've talked to the management
18 team about that because I said, you know we're
19 limited expense-wise when we have in-person
20 conferences. We should really think about doing it
21 as a hybrid because, if our objective is to have
22 more outreach, to make more people aware of the
23 services that we provide, I think in the future
24 that should be a definite consideration for how we
25 do business.

1 REPRESENTATIVE ZIMMERMAN: Okay. Thank
2 you, Mr. Chairman.

3 Thank you Mr. Secretary.

4 SECRETARY TORRES: Thank you.

5 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR:

6 Representative Sanchez, who's virtual.

7 REPRESENTATIVE SANCHEZ: Thank you,
8 Mr. Chairman.

9 Thank you, Mr. Secretary, and your team
10 for being here today.

11 We discuss the PASS system, the
12 Pennsylvania Agricultural Surplus System. The
13 Governor's executive budget (video difficulty) an
14 additional million dollars into that system for
15 this year.

16 SECRETARY TORRES: I'm not familiar with
17 the system.

18 REPRESENTATIVE SANCHEZ: This is for
19 hunger and food insecurity.

20 SECRETARY TORRES: Oh, okay.

21 REPRESENTATIVE SANCHEZ: Is that
22 something you could comment on to -- Have you seen
23 an uptick in the food insecurity for seniors, and
24 not only just in recent times, but since the
25 pandemic has started? Particularly interested

1 in --

2 And does your agency have plans to
3 address those items?

4 SECRETARY TORRES: I apologize for
5 interrupting. I just thought you were referring to
6 a specific system.

7 Yeah. In terms of food insecurity and
8 hunger, since the start of the pandemic, that was
9 one of our biggest concerns, especially because
10 senior community centers were closing down. You
11 could no longer engage in congregate meals, which
12 was -- You know, we have over 500 senior centers
13 across Pennsylvania, so it was a pretty large
14 impact.

15 But what ended up happening was, as
16 these senior centers closed, we started converting
17 to in-home delivered meals. Senior centers that
18 had kitchen capabilities were preparing meals, and
19 they were either coming and, you know, picking up
20 the food and taking it home, or driving by,
21 grabbing, and going with the meals. So, we put a
22 lot of priority into making sure that seniors would
23 not go hungry.

24 The supplemental bills that we've gotten
25 for COVID relief, the first one was nearly

1 10 million for food. And then we received the
2 second. The CARES funding also provided additional
3 monies for meals to support older adults. And then
4 this last supplemental round that just came out in
5 December, we have an additional 7 plus million for
6 meals.

7 It's been something that the department,
8 the Area Agencies on Aging have been very sensitive
9 to, making sure that any senior that was home alone
10 and needed meals were not going hungry.

11 In terms of, you know, the Governor in
12 his cabinet meetings, everybody usually reports
13 out. The Department of Agriculture, throughout the
14 pandemic, gave us updates on the food supply, where
15 we were having issues.

16 But, in terms of, you know, for example,
17 the food banks were doing a lot of work to box up
18 meals. I know I went and participated in some of
19 -- some of that preparation to get boxes to
20 seniors. So there was administration all in all, I
21 would say, has been very responsive to seniors as
22 it relates to food and food insecurity.

23 REPRESENTATIVE SANCHEZ: Great.

24 Do you feel, as far as the funding, that
25 additional dollars would be welcomed, or do you

1 feel, like, the seniors' needs are being adequately
2 met or that the, you know, toward the end of the
3 pandemic here, do you expect to see continued need
4 for those who are suffering through insecurity?

5 Of course, I guess generalized through
6 insecurity would exacerbate that problem as it
7 would (video difficulty) food banks and other
8 supplies?

9 SECRETARY TORRES: Yeah. The resources,
10 especially from the federal government, were
11 definitely welcomed. They gave us a lot of
12 flexibility to make sure that we could support the
13 nutritional needs of seniors.

14 Once more people get vaccinated and
15 senior community centers start opening up, we'll
16 probably shift back to congregate settings, and
17 that will shift some of the resources around
18 compared to where they're at now.

19 But, definitely, the demand for in-home
20 meals have increased. It remains to be seen when
21 we transition back how many of those individuals
22 will remain, you know, receiving in-home meals or
23 whether they'll transition back to a routine that
24 they were familiar with before the pandemic, more
25 congregate settings in a senior community center,

1 for example.

2 REPRESENTATIVE SANCHEZ: Thank you,
3 Secretary.

4 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

5 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR:
6 Representative Topper.

7 REPRESENTATIVE TOPPER: Thank you,
8 Mr. Chairman.

9 Thank you Mr. Secretary.

10 On page 5 of the Older Adult Protective
11 Services Annual Report, it indicates that the
12 regulatory requirements for face-to-face visits
13 with older adults was suspended except for
14 allegations of serious bodily injury, sexual abuse,
15 or serious physical injury.

16 How many, or what percentage of
17 investigations did this affect?

18 SECRETARY TORRES: I don't have that
19 number in front of me. That was something that we
20 did, because at the height of the pandemic we
21 wanted to minimize exposure to both staff and to
22 the older adults. So, if it was a situation where
23 information could be taken by phone, that was
24 acceptable.

25 REPRESENTATIVE TOPPER: So you said

1 something we did. Is that no longer -- Is that no
2 longer the policy? Have we returned to in-person
3 visits and investigations?

4 SECRETARY TORRES: That's correct. We
5 gave -- Once we came back to, like, the green phase
6 and beyond, we pretty much gave a lot of discretion
7 to the Area Agencies on Aging based on what they
8 were seeing at the local level.

9 For example, we've been -- On a weekly
10 basis, we've been meeting with -- well, we've been
11 reporting to adult day centers the positivity rate.
12 We have been monitoring positivity rates in
13 different communities, and depending on, you know,
14 what we were observing, directors at the agency
15 were allowed to make decisions, but not where it
16 related to serious bodily injury or risk of death.

17 REPRESENTATIVE TOPPER: And do you know
18 how many reports of need or the RONS were triggered
19 by the telehealth appointments? In other words, I
20 think what we're trying to figure out as a
21 committee is how successful were those, or was this
22 something we might have had some stuff fall through
23 the cracks until we were able to get in-person
24 visits again?

25 SECRETARY TORRES: I would have to

1 follow up with you. I don't have that level of
2 detail in front of me.

3 REPRESENTATIVE TOPPER: If you could,
4 that could be great. I mean, I --

5 Look, I understand as we -- Some of my
6 colleagues have brought up on both sides of the
7 aisle the issues that we had in your nursing homes,
8 and I understand that the Department of Aging was
9 not necessarily responsible for the policies that
10 led to some of these travesties. So that fault
11 lies with the Department of Health, and some of it
12 maybe was unavoidable.

13 But, what I will say is that, as you
14 mentioned in your testimony, that you are an
15 advocate for our seniors. And it would seem to me
16 that the department that was to be advocating for
17 our seniors was somewhat steam-rolled by other
18 departments that became quasi-policymakers through
19 the state of emergency, and that's something that
20 we need to make sure it never happens again.

21 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

22 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR:

23 Representative Samuelson.

24 REPRESENTATIVE SAMUELSON: Thank you,
25 Mr. Chair.

1 Mr. Secretary, thank you for being here
2 today and answering our questions about the
3 Department of Aging. I have a question about the
4 CARES funding. I know you mentioned some of it
5 went to reducing the waiting list for the options
6 program this past year by five or 600 spots, and
7 some of it went for meals, meal delivery.

8 I just wanted to ask, what other uses
9 were put into place for the CARES funding that you
10 have received from the federal government?

11 SECRETARY TORRES: Sure. Thank you,
12 Representative.

13 The first supplemental was referred to
14 as the Family First COVID Relief Act, primarily
15 provided funding for home-delivered meals,
16 congregate meals, and that was 10.2 million.

17 CARES funding, which was the second
18 supplemental, provided additional dollars,
19 \$37 million, and that was used for supported
20 services. That was 8 and a half million, plus
21 supported services. Additional money for
22 nutritional services, which was 20.4 million, and
23 then caregiver services. So these would be things
24 like transportation, care management, personal care
25 information and referral. It was \$4.3 million.

1 We also applied for a grant and received
2 \$3 million for our aging and disability resource
3 centers, and that's being used to provide care
4 transition for individuals with disability that are
5 transitioned back to a home from the hospital or
6 nursing facilities. We're using that money for
7 assistive technology, PPE, and support to avoid
8 social isolation.

9 Our long-term care ombudsman, again with
10 that second supplemental, received \$850,000, so the
11 things I mentioned earlier about the Padbot, using
12 videoconferencing technology to get into long-term
13 care settings to work with the residents, buying
14 computers, tablets. Leveraging technology as much
15 as we can to help residents, and also buying PPE
16 and other supplies that were needed throughout the
17 pandemic.

18 In the last supplemental that we got,
19 again, we got just over -- just over \$7 million for
20 additional nutritional support. For the first time
21 ever, we got like 3.8 million for protective
22 services, to improve protective services during
23 COVID, and we received \$169,000 again to support
24 our long-term care ombudsman function.

25 I think that summarizes the federal

1 money that we received under the last three
2 supplementals.

3 REPRESENTATIVE SAMUELSON: Thank you.
4 That protective services money, is that going out
5 through the counties, like, the 5 million we talked
6 about, the state money we talked about like
7 45 minutes ago?

8 SECRETARY TORRES: We're still deciding
9 the exact scope of that because, after the
10 legislation was passed, it took a few weeks for the
11 Administration for community living to propose what
12 the scope of that money would be used for, back to
13 appropriations at the federal level. We just got
14 instructions within the last two weeks, so we'll be
15 working -- we'll be working to figure out how
16 that's going to be allocated.

17 REPRESENTATIVE SAMUELSON: Keep us
18 posted. I know you're very concerned about the
19 shortage in direct care workers, and I noticed the
20 budget has a one-million-dollar initiative for
21 direct care training.

22 Can you tell us how that is going to
23 work state wide, or are there going to be several
24 different opportunities? Is it going to be county
25 by county? Will direct care workers have to go to

1 central locations for the training?

2 SECRETARY TORRES: Steve, can you help
3 with that one?

4 DEPUTY SECRETARY HORNER: I'm not
5 familiar with that, Secretary.

6 SECRETARY TORRES: Okay. Well, I know
7 back in 2019, back in April, the Long-Term Care
8 Council produced the blueprint on how to strengthen
9 our direct care workforce.

10 Representative, I can tell you training
11 was a big part of that. I'll get back to you with
12 the details --

13 REPRESENTATIVE SAMUELSON: Okay.

14 SECRETARY TORRES: -- on how the
15 training is going to be deployed.

16 REPRESENTATIVE SAMUELSON: Thank you.
17 And I also know the Governor is pushing for an
18 increase in the minimum wage, which has not been
19 changed in our state and our country for 11 years.
20 And I know increasing the minimum wage would also
21 help attract and retain direct care workers all
22 across the state.

23 Last question, I noticed there's another
24 initiative for agricultural surplus funds, another
25 million dollars for healthy meals to address food

1 insecurity. Can you give us some more details on
2 that, that million dollars for Pennsylvania
3 agricultural surplus system?

4 SECRETARY TORRES: I'm not directly
5 familiar with that, but I will get back to you on
6 it.

7 REPRESENTATIVE SAMUELSON: Okay. Thank
8 you very much.

9 And thank you, Representative Saylor.

10 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR:

11 Representative Gary Day, Chairman of the House
12 Aging Committee.

13 REPRESENTATIVE DAY: Thank you,
14 Mr. Chairman.

15 Mr. Chairman, as a former appropriations
16 member, there's so many budget questions to ask
17 when I come here, but this committee has really
18 gone through and asked quite a few questions, and
19 thank you, Mr. Secretary, for answering them and
20 enlightening the entire House of Representatives,
21 the work that you've been doing.

22 You know, one of the budget questions
23 that I have is the effect on the Governor's
24 proposed minimum wage increase, and the effect of
25 it if you've had an opportunity to look into and --

1 You know, it's been brought up before about, what
2 is your role in advocating for seniors before the
3 Administration. Some of my colleagues have stood
4 up and talked about that position. I feel the same
5 responsibility that they're asking you to take on
6 as well.

7 So the effect of the minimum wage
8 increase on the cost of care for seniors who
9 privately pay for services, whether it's in a
10 nursing home situation or maybe out-of-pocket
11 expenses, or any other situations.

12 Have you examined the Governor's
13 proposal for the minimum wage increase and what it
14 would do for seniors who are paying privately?

15 SECRETARY TORRES: It's likely that some
16 of that cost will go up. I think some of the --
17 some of the pros that should be considered is the
18 stability of having a workforce that you don't see
19 a whole lot of turnover and you don't have older
20 adults that are facing a lot of stress because of a
21 constant turnover of direct care workers.

22 I would also add, as Representative
23 Samuelson said, personal care aides, nursing
24 assistants, and home health aides are essential
25 workers and would benefit from a rise in the

1 minimum wage. A lot of these individuals,
2 20 percent, live in poverty and do -- do have some
3 form of government assistance. So I think there's
4 a lot of different angles to consider in terms of
5 the minimum wage, and why it would be an important
6 thing to consider.

7 REPRESENTATIVE DAY: Yeah, I appreciate
8 that, giving the people an opportunity to see how
9 you and the Administration view this impact that's
10 possibly out there. I really appreciate that
11 answer.

12 You know, you talked about there's
13 2.4 million seniors, and one of the growing
14 questions that people keep asking me is, when is it
15 my turn? I'll wait for my turn, but when is it my
16 turn? Am I going to be skipped? Am I gonna be
17 given a fair opportunity? 2.4 million seniors.

18 Last week the Governor said, a hundred
19 percent of the residents and employees in long-term
20 care have received their first dose. I'm not too
21 sure about that number, but we won't stop there.
22 We'll just talk about -- That's about 10 percent of
23 the seniors in Pennsylvania. How are we getting to
24 the other 90 percent?

25 You know, I want to see a plan. I want

1 to hear you say, well, there's 300,000 in home
2 care. We're getting to them this way. There's
3 150,000 that are served by Meals on Wheels. And
4 we're working through them. We're working through
5 the churches, and there's about 400,000 seniors
6 there, and get up to that 2.4 million, or the 3.2
7 that you talked about was 59 and over, because we
8 know -- you and I know that people 50 and over have
9 quite a high fatality rate when they have COVID.

10 So, this number is large, but I don't
11 see a plan. I think it's important that the plan
12 is in chunks of 2.4 million, if we use that number,
13 and long-term care is only 10 percent of that? How
14 are we getting to those other people? Can you list
15 that off yet? Have you gotten to that point? Do
16 you have that plan? Do you stand on the desk of
17 the Secretary of Health and the Governor and
18 advocate for seniors? That's my question.

19 SECRETARY TORRES: We represent seniors
20 with the Department of Health and all of my other
21 -- all the other agencies. Anything that we
22 observe, we bring to their attention and
23 coordinate.

24 I mentioned earlier the Area Agencies on
25 Aging are working. They're working at the local

1 level to do some of the things that you just
2 itemized. I highlight it again, Butler County,
3 because they have a good model where, working with
4 their local health system, they're getting about
5 300 allocations a week. That enables them to line
6 up older adults to get their vaccines.

7 They have a waiting list. Last week --
8 They may have had a waiting list of 900, but,
9 again, that's moving at a rate of about 300 a week.
10 Plus, if the system has any cancellation, they're
11 being notified so they're able to move somebody on
12 the list. So I think that type of local community
13 model is the kind of model that we have to
14 replicate.

15 And Area Agencies on Aging are working
16 on it. Within our department, again, PACE program
17 has set up a unit and we're trying to get ahead of
18 the level of frustration and anxiety that older
19 adults have had trying to get an appointment. So
20 we're working.

21 It's going to be multi-faceted. What
22 works in one county may not be the best thing for
23 another county. But I can tell you they're working
24 on it, and we're being supportive of every Area
25 Agencies on Aging that would like my support either

1 making a connection with a potential partner or in
2 any other way that we could support them.

3 REPRESENTATIVE DAY: Mr. Secretary,
4 thank you for those answers. I really appreciate
5 that. I'm to the end of my time here today at the
6 Appropriations Committee. Therefore, we'll
7 probably be inviting you before our committee to
8 talk a little bit more about these issues. Thank
9 you so much.

10 And thank you to the Chairman and the
11 committee of the Appropriations Committee. Thanks.

12 SECRETARY TORRES: Thank you.

13 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: After
14 checking with Chairman Bradford, neither he or I
15 have anything else to add.

16 And with that, thank you, Mr. Secretary,
17 and your staff for being a part of these hearings
18 today. Thank you very much.

19 With that, we will adjourn and we will
20 reconvene tomorrow morning at 10:00 a.m. with the
21 Department of Corrections.

22 (Whereupon, the hearing concluded).

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C E R T I F I C A T E

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I, Karen J. Meister, Reporter, Notary Public, duly commissioned and qualified in and for the County of York, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, hereby certify that the foregoing is a true and accurate transcript, to the best of my ability, of a public hearing taken from a videotape recording and reduced to computer printout under my supervision.

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