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Pennsylvania Unveils Five-year Affordable Housing Strategy

Strategy will focus on serving more people in the community.

Harrisburg, PA – Today, the leaders of the Department of Human Services (DHS), the Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency (PHFA), and the Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) released a five-year housing strategy to connect Pennsylvanians to affordable, integrated, and supportive housing.

DHS Secretary Ted Dallas was joined by Brian Hudson, executive director & CEO of the Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency, Department of Community and Economic Development Secretary Dennis Davin, and DHS' executive housing director, Ben Laudermilch, at the unveiling event at Shepherd's Crossing in Mechanicsburg. Shepherd's Crossing is an inclusive workforce housing community.

"Too many Pennsylvanians live in institutions when they could live at home with the right supports. Too many are rent-burdened and too many Pennsylvanians experience or are at risk of homelessness," said Governor Tom Wolf. "Today is about working together to find ways to make better use of our resources so that we can make affordable housing a reality for more Pennsylvanians."

"Ninety-five percent of Pennsylvanians who need these services want to live in their community, not in an institution or a nursing home. But right now, we can only serve 51 percent of them in the community," said Secretary Dallas. "Governor Wolf and all of us here today are committed to promoting independence and giving all people, regardless of their age or disability, a voice in choosing where they live. If we are successful, the services we provide will match what our clients want and, because community-based care costs about half of institutional care, we can also save millions of taxpayer dollars."

The strategy outlines the problems with the current state of housing opportunities for individuals with targeted goals and solutions spanning through 2020. The proposal addresses the following populations:

- Currently 53,574 Pennsylvanians living in institutions but could live in the community with housing services and supports;
- There were 15,421 individuals and families experiencing homelessness or are at-risk of homelessness during 2015; and
- In 2015, 46.6% of Pennsylvanians have extremely low incomes and are rent-burdened.

"We're pleased to partner with the Department of Human Services to enhance opportunities for independent living by Pennsylvanians. We're committed to providing supportive housing

services for the state's most vulnerable citizens and maximizing each individual's housing choices," said Brian Hudson.

The plan's goal is to leverage internal and external resources to collaborate with all levels of government and private agencies to make housing resources and services more accessible and available to a wide range of individuals served by state and local government.

"This plan marks another great illustration of the implementation of Governor Wolf's Government that Works initiative and DCED is extremely proud to be at the table for this collaboration," said Secretary Davin. "It's a part of our role at DCED to address the needs of Pennsylvania's communities and through implementation of this plan we can begin to address the need for housing opportunities."

Some of the initial steps announced today include the following:

- Using a portion of the "Money Follows the Person" federal grant funds to expand the number of regional housing coordinators across the state from 11 to at least 14. These coordinators work with local housing authorities and stakeholders to help transition individuals to the community;
- Enhancing and expanding use of the housing network database operated by PHFA that can be used to match those who need housing with affordable housing throughout Pennsylvania.
- Continuing the "Rapid Rehousing" pilot program that is ongoing in Philadelphia to help those who have had recently become homeless and those who have experienced housing instability find permanent housing; and
- Expanding the use of Medicaid dollars to help move people to stable housing and maintain housing through housing-related supports.

"There is no quick fix to addressing these issues," said Secretary Dallas. "This is a marathon and not a sprint. Comprehensively addressing housing issues will take more than the steps we are announcing today and will take some time to complete. The strategy we announced today lays out our vision for the next five years and the steps we will have to take to bring this vision closer to reality."

MEDIA CONTACT: Kait Gillis, 717.425.7606
Jeff Sheridan, 717.783.1116

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