



News for Immediate Release

Jan 29, 2013

Department of Health Previews Governor Corbett's \$5 Million Proposal to Increase Access to Health Care in Rural and Underserved Areas

McAdoo (Schuylkill County) – Gov. Tom Corbett's 2013-14 budget will increase access to health care in rural and underserved areas by funding community health centers and additional medical services, as well as expanding programs to help attract and retain health care practitioners.

Corbett's \$5 million health proposal was announced locally today by Department of Health Acting Secretary Michael Wolf as a preview to the governor's 2013-14 budget address next week.

"The department applauds and supports Governor Corbett's proposal that will help ensure immediate access to primary care in areas of the state that need it most," Wolf said. "These are milestone initiatives that will change the way we serve those who are underinsured or underserved, providing additional options for care and consistency in care over time."

The proposal expands upon Senate Bill 5, sponsored by Senator Edwin Erickson (R-Chester), providing \$4 million to establish the Community-Based Health Care Subsidy program as a way for the commonwealth to create new community-based health care clinics and expand services at existing clinics. These community-based clinics will create immediate access to or enhance preventative primary care services to underserved areas and uninsured individuals of the state.

The remaining \$1 million will be dedicated to the Primary Health Practitioner Loan Repayment Program (LRP) to recruit and retain health care providers in rural and underserved areas. The LRP expansion will create 24 new loan repayment slots for physicians, dentists and other health care practitioners.

"Increasing funding to the loan repayment program will permit the department to provide additional funds to applicants that will allow for the recruitment and retention of more primary care physicians and practitioners in rural and underserved areas of the state," Wolf said.

"Not only will this make Pennsylvania more competitive with other states, it will allow residents in rural areas of the state to have consistent access to quality practitioners and build a network of care that will be a much needed resource in these communities," Wolf said.

Wolf discussed the governor's budget proposal in McAdoo today while touring St. Luke's Miners Health Center, a 2012-13 recipient of a Community Primary Care Challenge Grant.

As a result of the grant, the facility has been able to hire a full-time primary care physician, a full-time medical assistant and has increased its days of operation from three days to five days a week, allowing them to better serve the health care needs of those in the community.

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