



**Pennsylvania Department of Health**  
**2015-16 Budget, Opening Remarks**  
**House of Representatives Appropriations Committee**  
**Dr. Karen Murphy, PhD, RN, Secretary**  
**Dr. Rachel Levine, M.D., Physician General**  
*March 17, 2015*

Good morning. Dr. Levine and 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 2015-16 budget for the Department of Health. Before we begin with questions, we would like to highlight our budget priorities for the department. Governor Wolf's budget plan, presented earlier this month, is focused on creating jobs that pay, schools that teach and government that works. 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 2015-16 budget includes a 2.1% increase in state General Fund appropriations. The department's mission is to improve the health of all Pennsylvania residents. We are committed the fulfilling the mission and we will responsibly direct our strategic resources to achieve our goal.

In order to be a government that works, maintaining the status quo in approaching health is no longer an option. Health care spending both nationally and in Pennsylvania is rising at an unsustainable rate, while improvements in health status and quality of health care services remain varied. Pennsylvania, as are other state governments across the country, is addressing the issue of health, health care delivery and costs head on. Prior to coming to Pennsylvania, I had the opportunity to work at CMS with 38 states and territories to improve and accelerate health innovation on initiatives aimed to improve health, improve health care delivery and decrease cost. I am happy to return to my home state and continue this work in Pennsylvania. In December, the Department was awarded a Model Design grant of \$3 million from the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Innovation to design and develop a Pennsylvania specific plan for health care innovation and delivery system transformation. Governor Wolf has proposed to match this grant to support Pennsylvania in designing and implementing innovations in health that will result in better health care delivery that is more efficient and less wasteful, allowing us to ultimately achieve better health for all Pennsylvanians.

The funding will be used to design and implement strategies to improve health, health care delivery and lower cost. We will be working across the state with physicians, hospitals, commercial payers, community leaders, consumer groups, and, of course, hopefully closely with all of you, to reach our goals. The department has been, and will continue to work in

collaboration with the Departments of Human Services, Insurance, Aging and Drug and Alcohol Programs and we would like to thank them for their continued work and dedication to this ongoing effort. Specifically, the funding will be used to engage national experts and develop 5 year plans for Pennsylvania in population health, health care delivery transformation and health care economics. We will be investing in data analytics and developing a state-wide workforce development plan. Finally, we will be identifying the best way to leverage health information technology to accelerate transformation. Our goal is to become a national leader in state-led health innovation and we look forward to working with you in achieving better health and better health care at a lower cost for you and your constituents.

In order to address the health needs as a result of the evolution of the natural gas industry in Pennsylvania, the department's Bureau of Epidemiology works in conjunction with the Department of Environmental Protection to investigate health related complaints and concerns. Governor Wolf has proposed \$100,000 for the department to be able to establish a registry to monitor the health of Pennsylvanians who are located near natural gas wells to better determine what, if any, long term health effects may be experienced from natural gas drilling operations.

Unfortunately, Pennsylvania has one of the highest rates of prescription drug abuse in the country. The Department of Health views prescription drug abuse and rising heroin addiction as a public health crisis in Pennsylvania. Last year, the legislature passed Senate Bill 1180 that called for the implementation of a much needed prescription drug monitoring program, the Achieving Better Care by Monitoring All Prescriptions program. This act is intended to increase the quality of patient care by giving prescribers and dispensers access to a patient's prescription medication history through an electronic system that will alert medical professionals to signs of potential prescription medication abuse for purposes of making treatment determinations. The Governor has proposed that the program receive \$2.1 million to help establish program operations. The Department of Health will be working with the Departments of Drug and Alcohol, Human Services, State, the Attorney General's office and the Pennsylvania State Police to develop a comprehensive plan to leverage the drug monitoring program to decrease prescription drug abuse and heroin addiction. As many of you have shared with me, the Department understands that this is an issue that is affecting the lives of too many Pennsylvanians.

Pennsylvania is in the midst of an overdose epidemic. Heroin has become inexpensive, costing as little as \$10 per dose, and is an easily obtainable substitute for other drugs. Research by the Center for Rural Pennsylvania and the Pennsylvania State Coroners Association has found that since 2002, there have been more deaths annually caused by drug overdoses than auto accidents. The most recent data indicates that for the first half of 2013 alone, there were 568 deaths where heroin was a contributing factor, putting it on track to exceed the 882 deaths from 2012 where heroin was a contributing factor. As much as we need to prevent the use and distribution of this lethal drug, we need to protect the lives of those who obtain it. Naloxone, an opioid antagonist which can quickly reverse an overdose of heroin and other opioid based narcotics, is now available to more Pennsylvanians than before, thanks to the passage of Act 139 of 2014. Prior to Act 139, outside of a healthcare setting, only Paramedics and higher certified pre-hospital healthcare providers were able to carry and administer Naloxone. Act 139 has made this drug available to EMTs, Police Officers, Firefighters and the loved ones of those who are susceptible

to an overdose. Since the passage, this expanded availability has already had a positive impact, with several police departments in Eastern Pennsylvania having reversed over 20 heroin overdoses. 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.

As directed by Act 148 of 2014, the department is now required to pay for the testing of six new Lysosomal Storage Disorders as part of the mandatory screening panel for newborn children. An additional \$1.4 million increase to the department's Newborn Screening program was requested to cover the costs associated with Act 148.

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

- Act 83 of 2014 – The Lyme and Related Tick-Borne Disease Surveillance, Education, Prevention and Treatment Act requires the Department of Health to establish a task force on Lyme disease and related tick-borne diseases.
- Act 94 of 2014 – The Newborn Child Pulse Oximetry Screening Act requires the Department of Health to require a birthing facility to perform a critical congenital heart defects screening using pulse oximetry on a newborn child in its care before discharge from the facility.
- Act 139 of 2014 - Amends the Controlled Substance, Drug, Device and Cosmetic Act providing for drug overdose response immunity for a person reporting a drug overdose or experiencing a drug overdose, as well as amending the prehospital practitioner scope of practice of emergency medical services providers to include the administration of naloxone and providing for the supply and administration of naloxone.
- As previously mentioned, Act 191 of 2014 – The Achieving Better Care by Monitoring All Prescriptions Program (ABC-MAP) Act.

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

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