



COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA  
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF HEALTH

March 17, 2022

The Honorable Stanley Saylor  
245 Main Capitol Bldg.  
PO Box 202094  
Harrisburg, PA 17120-2094

The Honorable Matthew Bradford  
512 E Main Capitol Bldg.  
PO Box 202070  
Harrisburg, PA 17120-2070

Dear Chairman Saylor and Chairman Bradford,

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before the House Appropriations Committee to discuss the Governor's proposed 2022-2023 Fiscal Year Budget for the Department of Health. We appreciate your committee's engagement on the issues important to those we mutually serve. As discussed, below are responses to questions posed by committee members during the hearing:

1. Representative Ecker requested information regarding the total dollar amount expended on COVID-19 vaccine advertising.

Between April 2021 and November 2021, \$8.1 million was spent towards advertising vaccine safety, accessibility, and hesitancy. Between September 2021 through October 2021, \$528,317 was spent on vaccine messaging targeted towards travelers through the ELC Traveler's Grant. From December 2021 through April 2022, the Department of Community & Economic Development (DCED) is utilizing \$2.9 million for the advertising of pediatric vaccines for children ages five through eleven with federal funds received from Center for Disease Control (CDC) Immunization and Vaccines for Children programs. Still pending for the near future is \$3 million in CARES Act funding slated for public education on COVID-19 boosters.

2. Representative Bullock requested information regarding what the Department of Health did to "make WIC local agencies whole" following the cancellation of the Women, Infants, & Children Program (WIC) Request for Applications (RFA).

After the cancellation of the WIC RFA, there were existing federal funds available to be spent on the transition. The Department worked with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), the principal funder, to facilitate a mechanism by which appropriate expenses incurred by the WIC local agencies from the transition would be approved for reimbursement through Nutritional Service and Administration (NSA) funds for the fiscal year of 2021. As a result, the Department did not have to provide any additional funding



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to cover expenses due to the RFA cancellation and local agencies were able to use existing funding for program costs without defunding future projects.

3. Representative Hershey requested data on the effectiveness of COVID-19 advertising.

DCED, our sister agency partner in vaccine messaging, has deployed integrated media campaigns utilizing a wide variety of digital and traditional media to reach commonwealth residents. Television is one component of these campaigns out of a dozen or more distinct media channels and is often one of our most effective tools in motivating Pennsylvanians to action when used in combination with other digital media, public health guidance and other channels.

To measure effectiveness and impact of these campaigns and others, DCED uses statistical modeling and advanced analytics as led by a professional data scientist. This work involves fitting a mathematical model/algorithm to existing public data, in this case - vaccination shots, while controlling for other factors, thus being able to isolate the incremental lift of paid advertising on vaccinations during a campaign period. This allows the commonwealth to see the difference between the predictable vaccination rates based on the base trendlines vs. what the effect of paid advertising.

An analysis of vaccine hesitancy campaigns shows that paid advertising contributed a 17% incremental lift to all shots given from May to November, and 23% to pediatric shots from December to March. From May to November, when isolating the impact of television and video, analysis indicates that a little more than half (56%) of this incremental lift can be attributed to television and video commonwealth-wide. During the December to March time period, DCED has some limitations on data access due to sensitivity around the age of the eligible audience, however, modeling of the CDC data reported for Pennsylvania demonstrates a 23% incremental lift among pediatric audiences, with the most effective mediums and channels being televisions and video, specifically including public service announcements (PSAs) by Pennsylvanian doctors and pediatricians.

Given the current shift to this new phase of the pandemic, campaign messaging has shifted to support general tips around COVID-19 safety: vax if you haven't already, mask when in a crowd and test if you feel sick, rather than campaigns focused on vaccine hesitancy. The current media campaign in market (Kids Vax) is due to end this week.

4. Representative Owlett requested information on the fiscal impact of the 4.1 proposed staffing ratio for skilled nursing facilities.



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As we noted during the hearing, the initially quoted funding in the Group 1 regulatory analysis form (RAF) is an estimate based on data available at the time of publication and currently still under review as the department prepares the final-form regulations, which are anticipated to be promulgated in Fall 2022. As we further noted, the proposed Long-Term Care regulations are being promulgated in four separate regulatory packages, each with its own anticipated fiscal impact. Further, the RAF for the Group 4 regulatory package, will include the updated fiscal impact of facilities staffing up to 4.1, is still being developed by the Department and the Department of Human Services, the state Medicaid agency. The Department is currently finalizing these regulations, and pending approval by the Office of Attorney General, these proposed regulations will be published in ring 2022. The Department is currently reviewing all comments received on the regulations and is happy to have further conversations with the Committee at your request on this topic of great importance.

5. Representative Sanchez requested links to per-and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) study materials and information.

Below are links to the most current information on the ongoing PFAS study found on the websites of the [Department](#) and [RTI](#).

6. Representative Struzzi requested additional studies noting the value of a 4.1 staffing ratio for nursing facilities.

Several studies of note which support this proposed policy are attached to this correspondence for the committee's review.

7. Representative Wheeland requested any available information regarding either cost savings or additional expenses which may have arisen due to Department staff teleworking.

As noted in the hearing, pages 8 and 9 of the recent report released by the Governor's Green Council details energy savings realized through the pandemic. That report can be found [here](#). For a broader, administration-wide details, we respectfully suggest that this may be a question best addressed by the Office of Administration and the Department of General Services.

8. Representative Krueger requested updated numbers for Act 315 funding for Delaware County and its new Department of Health, at the rate of \$6 per capita.



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These numbers will be updated with current Census data in the Department's forthcoming re-budget and will be made available to the committee in the near future.

9. Representative Fritz inquired if the quoted costs of 90 to 95% for staffing in the University of Pittsburgh's two epidemiological studies to evaluate the health effects of hydraulic fracturing are consistent with other studies funded by the Department.

It is difficult to offer a direct comparison as requested considering that the University of Pittsburgh studies are observational whereas most studies under the purview of the Department of Health are conducted under the Health Research Office and are experimental in nature.

Thank you for your questions, and for your time, and for the opportunity to speak with the committee about the ongoing health needs of Pennsylvanians. If you have any further questions, please contact the Department's legislative director, Dave Toth, at [datoth@pa.gov](mailto:datoth@pa.gov).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Keara Klinepeter".

Keara Klinepeter  
Acting Secretary of Health