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STATE REPRESENTATIVE
LA'TASHA D. MAYES
WOMEN'S HEALTH CAUCUS
JOINT SUB-COMMITTEE ON WOMEN & GIRLS OF COLOR, CHAIR

June 14, 2023

Honorable Scott Martin
Majority Appropriations Chair
281 Main Capitol Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Honorable Vincent Hughes
Democratic Appropriations Chair
545 Main Capitol Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Honorable Jordan Harris
Majority Appropriations Chair
512E Main Capitol Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Honorable Seth Grove
Republican Appropriations Chair
245 Main Capitol Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Dear Colleagues,

As the Pennsylvania Women's Health Caucus, we recognize that the state budget reflects our Commonwealth's priorities. A top priority of our caucus is ensuring the health and wellbeing of Pennsylvania women and families, and we are committed to fighting for a budget that supports that mission. Our budget priorities can be broken down into five categories, which align with our 2023-2024 Caucus Platform.

First, Pennsylvanian's reproductive freedom is threatened in our current budget. We must eliminate -- or significantly reduce by a minimum of 50% -- the amount of taxpayer funds that subsidize non-medical, non-evidence-based anti-abortion centers, also known as Crisis Pregnancy Centers (CPCs). These centers have been proven to disseminate false information to deceive their clients and it is a disservice to Pennsylvania that taxpayer dollars are used to fund them. We should instead give funding to health care centers that provide the reproductive healthcare people deserve, which means care that will outline the full range of options available to them.

Second, we can use this budget to tackle the maternal mortality crisis. We are grateful that Governor Shapiro has proposed \$2.3 million to implement prevention strategies to reduce maternal mortality and morbidity rates through the Maternal Mortality Review Committee. However, our caucus wants this investment to be increased to \$10 million, so we can make significant progress. \$2.7 million of this investment should be for direct grant support to frontline Black maternal health organizations with a focus on Greater Philadelphia outside of Philadelphia proper, Central and Western Pennsylvania. As this crisis disproportionately affects Black women and people of color, these investments are necessary to tackle the health inequities in our Commonwealth.

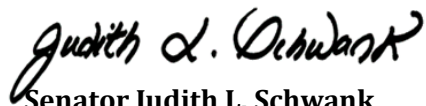
Third, access to equitable health care can be expanded through our budget. Specifically, we support the \$100 million investment into mental health resources proposed in House Bill 849 that was passed with bipartisan support in the Pennsylvania House of Representatives on June 7, 2023. We are hoping to see that there is an adequate amount distributed at the county level to assure communities can target their unique needs. We also support the proposal that would provide universal free breakfast for all Pennsylvanian students, regardless of income. This important initiative helps to level the playing field and provide students with a healthy start to their day.

Fourth, we can use the state budget to ensure the economic empowerment of all of Pennsylvania's families. We support a \$30 million increase for Pre-K Counts and Head Start, as well as \$500 million increase for childcare staff wages. Both investments will pay off significantly for Pennsylvania, by giving our young learners the resources they need to be successful and ensuring that working parents have access to the childcare they need to allow them to participate in Pennsylvania's workforce and economy.

Fifth, we have the opportunity to fight for justice and inclusion by including strategic investments in our budget. We need to invest \$12 million in first-time funding to help low-income homeowners and landlords remove lead paint hazards in older homes, supporting good health at home. Of this, \$10 million should be allocated to the Maternal and Child Health line item in the Department of Health (DOH) that would be distributed by the Department, much like the federal Housing and Urban Development lead remediation grant money is distributed already by DOH. In addition, we support a vital \$4 million increase to Act 44 funding for domestic violence services in the upcoming state budget. Domestic violence programs are at a tipping point, nearing financial crisis that threatens the ability to keep their doors open to welcome victims who are fleeing life-threatening violence in their own homes. We need these programs to ensure that women and people have the resources they need to be safe from intimate and partner violence.

Thank you for your commitment to fighting for the best future for Pennsylvanians. We appreciate you taking the time to read and consider our priorities, which have been selected with the women and families of Pennsylvania at the forefront of our minds. We know that by making these investments, we will have a bright future for our Commonwealth.

Sincerely,



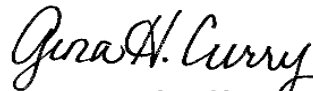
Senator Judith L. Schwank
11th Legislative District
Women's Health Caucus Co-Chair



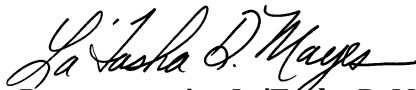
Representative Mary Jo Daley
148th Legislative District
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Senator Amanda M. Cappelletti
17th Legislative District
Women's Health Caucus Co-Chair



Representative Gina H. Curry
164th Legislative District
Women's Health Caucus Co-Chair



Representative La'Tasha D. Mayes
24th Legislative District
Women's Health Caucus
Joint Subcommittee on Women and Girls of Color, Chair