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June 25, 2026
Title V MCH Block Grant Coordinator
Bureau of Family Health
Division of Child and Adult Health Services
Health and Welfare Building
625 Forster St. Harrisburg, PA 17120-0701

Dear Title V MCH Block Grant Coordinator,

Pennsylvania Women's Health Caucus is pleased to submit comments to the Pennsylvania Department of Health's Bureau of Family Health regarding the Title V State Action Plan for Year 2 (2027) of the 2026-2030 Title V funding cycle.

The Pennsylvania Women's Health Caucus is a bicameral caucus of members of the Pennsylvania General Assembly dedicated to advancing policies that improve health outcomes for women, children, and families across the Commonwealth. The Caucus works to address healthcare disparities, improve access to quality care, and support initiatives that promote physical, mental, and reproductive health at every stage of life.

After our review of the Title V State Action Plan for Year 2 of the 2026-2030 funding cycle, we submit the following comments:

As noted in the PA Department of Health Bureau of Family Health five-year needs and capacity assessment, sexual and reproductive decision making was highlighted as an area of need for the Commonwealth. Additionally, adolescent mental health and suicide prevention are listed as priorities of the 2026-2030 action plan. To that end, historically, the Health Resource Center model and other programs that support adolescent access to sexual and reproductive healthcare have been included as strategies to achieve the adolescent health priorities outlined in the plan. These programs provide critical access points for young people seeking confidential, age-appropriate health information, referrals, and services. However, the strategies outlined in the Action Plan have shifted, and the continued support of these adolescent health access programs appears uncertain. Without explicit investment in programs that connect adolescents to sexual and reproductive healthcare, many young people may lose access to vital sources of care and support.

Safeguarding Adolescent’s Access to Health Care

It is vital that the state continues to fund programs that protect adolescent access to healthcare services. Many barriers exist that can prevent adolescents from accessing timely services to meet their health needs, including barriers related to transportation, cost, and confidentiality. The Women’s Health Caucus recognizes that adolescents across Pennsylvania, particularly those in rural communities, underserved urban neighborhoods, and medically underserved areas, often face significant obstacles when seeking healthcare services. These challenges are compounded by provider shortages, long travel distances to care, lack of reliable transportation, concerns about confidentiality, and limited access to accurate health information and referrals.

Community-based adolescent health programs help bridge these gaps and ensure young people can access preventive care and support before health concerns become more serious. Without meaningfully addressing these barriers and investing in access to care, adolescents risk going without care.

The Connection Between Mental, Sexual, and Reproductive Health and Overall Health and Wellbeing

Sexual and reproductive health is inextricably linked to overall health and wellbeing. Sexual and reproductive health information and resources, including STI testing, healthy relationship education, and consent education positively contribute to physical, mental, and emotional wellbeing.¹ Programs that connect adolescents to sexual and reproductive healthcare information and services often also provide mental health screenings, referrals, and connections to social services, strengthening the broader healthcare safety net available to young people. Studies have found high rates of co-morbidity between mental health disorders and reproductive health conditions, demonstrating the importance of coordinated care.² It is vital that the Title V program prioritizes programs that provide comprehensive health care that addresses the interconnections between sexual and reproductive health and overall health and wellbeing.

Addressing Healthcare Deserts

It is critical to preserve adolescent access to healthcare, including sexual and reproductive healthcare. In Pennsylvania, health service deserts continue to grow, with several hospitals closing in recent years and more anticipated to close. As healthcare access is eroded, it is important to preserve existing healthcare services and continue to fill the gaps in care left by hospital and health network closures. In communities across Pennsylvania represented by members of the Women’s Health Caucus, Caucus members have witnessed firsthand the

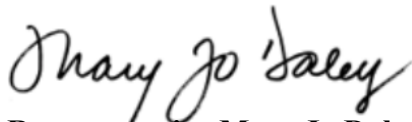
¹ Society for Adolescent Health and Medicine (2025). Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights. *The Journal of adolescent health* : official publication of the Society for Adolescent Medicine, 76(5), 954–960. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2025.02.008>

² Zaks N, Batuure A, Lin E, et al. Association Between Mental Health and Reproductive System Disorders in Women: A Systematic Review and Meta-analysis. *JAMA Netw Open*. 2023;6(4):e238685. doi:10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2023.8685

growing challenges created by healthcare workforce shortages, provider scarcity, and the closure or consolidation of healthcare facilities. These trends disproportionately impact young people, women, and families who already face barriers to obtaining care. Maintaining and strengthening community-based adolescent health programs and referral networks is essential to ensuring equitable access to healthcare services throughout the Commonwealth.

We appreciate the opportunity to submit comments and are hopeful that the Bureau of Family Health considers these in the development of future State Action Plans for the 2026-2030 funding cycles. If you have questions or would like to request additional information, please contact Ashe Prawl, Policy Administrator, Pennsylvania Women's Health Caucus, at ashe.prawl@pasenate.com or 610-768-3101.

Thank you,



Representative Mary Jo Daley
148th Representative District
Women's Health Caucus Co-Chair



Senator Amanda M. Cappelletti
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Women's Health Caucus Co-Chair



Representative Gina H. Curry
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