

Legislative  
Budget  
&  
Finance  
Committee



*A Joint Committee of the Pennsylvania General Assembly*

# 2015 Annual Report

*January 2016*



# Legislative Budget and Finance Committee

A JOINT COMMITTEE OF THE PENNSYLVANIA GENERAL ASSEMBLY

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January 2016

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TO: All Members of the Pennsylvania General Assembly

This Annual Report of the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee summarizes the 14 reports and performance audits completed by the Committee during calendar year 2015. A list of all reports completed since 1982, categorized by subject area, begins on page 36. The report also describes the duties and responsibilities of the Committee and provides information on the Committee's staff and operations.

The Committee welcomes questions and comments regarding its activities and this report.

Respectfully submitted,

Robert B. Mensch  
Chairman

## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

PHILIP R. DURGIN

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LEGISLATIVE BUDGET AND FINANCE COMMITTEE**

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## STATUTORY COMPOSITION

### **STATUTORY COMPOSITION**

Act 1959-195 (46 P.S. §70.1 et. seq.) created the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee as a bipartisan, bicameral legislative agency. The act specifies that the Committee is to consist of 12 members, six Senators and six Representatives. The Committee is divided equally between both parties in the House and Senate.

The President Pro Tempore of the Senate, the Speaker of the House of

Representatives, and Majority and Minority Leaders of each House are designated by law to be members of the Committee, but they may designate other members to serve in their stead. The President Pro Tempore of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives appoint three additional members of their respective Houses, at least two of whom are from the Minority party.

The Committee elects its own Chairman, Vice Chairman, Secretary, and Treasurer.

### **2015 OFFICERS AND MEMBERS**

#### OFFICERS

Senator Robert B. Mensch .....	Chairman
Senator James R. Brewster.....	Vice Chairman
Representative Robert W. Godshall .....	Secretary
Representative Jake Wheatley .....	Treasurer

#### MEMBERS

##### SENATORS

James R. Brewster  
Michele Brooks  
Thomas McGarrigle  
Robert B. Mensch  
Christine M. Tartaglione  
John N. Wozniak

##### REPRESENTATIVES

Stephen E. Barrar  
Jim Christiana  
Scott Conklin  
Robert W. Godshall  
Peter Schweyer  
Jake Wheatley

## ROLE AND RESOURCES

### STATUTORY CHARGES

Under Act 1959-195, as amended by Act 1961-645, the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee (LB&FC) is empowered to review Commonwealth revenues and expenditures to identify unnecessary expenditures, promote economy in state government, and ensure that state funds are expended in accordance with legislative intent and law.

The Committee is charged to report “from time to time, to the members of the Legislature and . . . the standing committees of the Senate and House of Representatives with respect to any of its findings or recommendations . . . .”

Act 1981-35 requires the LB&FC to conduct a performance audit of the Department of Transportation every six years. A summary of the study released in 2015 is included in this report. This requirement was deleted by Act 2015-13.

Act 1986-93, as amended by Act 1998-166, requires the LB&FC to conduct a performance audit to examine the PGC’s compliance with its strategic plan every three years. A summary of study released in 2015 is included in this report.

Act 1995-17 requires that the Pennsylvania State Police establish a system for conducting instant background checks on prospective firearms purchasers. The act also establishes a \$2 instant background check fee and a \$3 surcharge on each firearms sale, and requires the LB&FC to assess the adequacy of these fees every five years. A summary of the study released in 2015 is included in this report.

Act 2004-71 requires that the LB&FC issue annual reports to the Legislature an-

alyzing the impact, if any, of the implementation of legalized slots gaming on the Lottery. A summary of the 2015 study is included in this report. This requirement was deleted by Act 2015-13.

Act 2004-159 amends the Fish and Boat Code to implement a new license fee structure and requires the LB&FC to conduct a performance audit of the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission every three years. The next study is due in 2016.

Act 2012-207 directed the LB&FC to evaluate the impact of its provisions on access to prescription drugs at independent and chain retail pharmacies. A summary of this study is included in this report.

Five House resolutions required the LB&FC to study (1) funding of county adult probation services, (2) the Commonwealth’s network of elder abuse task forces, (3) family caregivers in Pa’s home and community-based waiver programs, (4) the Department of Human Service’s implementation of the *Olmstead* Decision as it pertains to State Centers, and (5) implementation of the PA Safety in Youth Sports Act. Summaries of these studies are included in this report.

Four Senate resolutions required the LB&FC to study (1) dental services for persons with disabilities in PA, (2) the feasibility of alternative charter school authorizers in PA, (3) the feasibility and cost effectiveness of merging PA public school district health care plans, and (4) family work support programs. Summaries of these studies are included in this report.

## **REPORT DEVELOPMENT**

The key steps involved in an LB&FC performance audit are outlined below.

### **Overview of Key Steps in the LB&FC Performance Audit Process**

#### **1. AUDIT ADOPTION PHASE**

- Audit project initiated by statutory mandate, resolution, or proposal by LB&FC member or other member of the General Assembly.
- Audit project formally adopted by LB&FC officers and/or full Committee.
- Audit assigned to LB&FC staff and incorporated into staff audit schedule.

#### **2. ADMINISTRATION AND PLANNING PHASE**

- Develop preliminary audit survey questionnaire.
- Develop audit scope and objectives.
- Develop preliminary survey work plans.

#### **3. PRELIMINARY SURVEY PHASE**

- Establish agency reference file.
- Conduct entrance conference.
- Review meeting minutes.
- Conduct initial interviews.
- Obtain audit perspectives (agency staff and "outsiders").
- Review prior reports.
- Test legal compliance.
- Test internal controls.
- Develop non-finding sections.
- Identify audit issues to pursue during fieldwork.

#### **4. FIELDWORK PHASE**

- Develop fieldwork audit plans.
- Focused audit activities conducted at central office and field locations.
- Data collection, analysis, and verification carried out in all finding areas.
- Develop draft findings and reference report.

#### **5. REPORT REFERENCING AND INTERNAL QUALITY REVIEW PHASE**

- Final referenced copy of draft report prepared and reviewed by audit team.
- Draft report reviewed by Executive Director and/or a project manager not previously involved in the audit for internal quality control review.
- Audit team makes necessary report adjustments.

#### **6. REPORT PRODUCTION, RELEASE, AND POST-RELEASE PHASE**

- Confidential draft report sent to the agency for their review.
- Agency response received and final report printed.
- Prepare oral presentation and press release.
- Meeting held and report discussed, released, and distributed.
- Audit files archived.

**STAFF RESOURCES**

At the end of 2015 the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee had a full-time staff complement of 11. The auditing staff includes persons with graduate degrees in public administration and

business administration. The staff also includes a person with a doctorate degree in social work, two attorneys, and a certified public accountant. The LB&FC organizational structure is shown on the following page.

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LEGISLATIVE BUDGET AND FINANCE COMMITTEE STAFF

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Terry Beam .....	Executive Secretary	Krista Keisling .....	Paralegal
Patricia Berger, JD .	Senior Counsel/Project Manager	Christopher Latta .....	Project Manager
Philip Durgin .....	Executive Director	Randal Mortimore .....	Analyst
Michael Ignagni.....	Analyst	Maryann Nardone, Ph.D. .	Project Manager
Tomeka Jenrette.....	Secretary	Anne Witkonis .....	Analyst
Rick Jones, JD.....	Counsel		

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**RESEARCH RESOURCES**

To support its research activity, the LB&FC staff maintains a research library. Library materials are also available for use by legislators and their staffs.

The LB&FC library includes financial, legislative, and legal resource documents. It also includes books on auditing standards and performance auditing and professional journals and newsletters. Also available are departmental budget presentations.

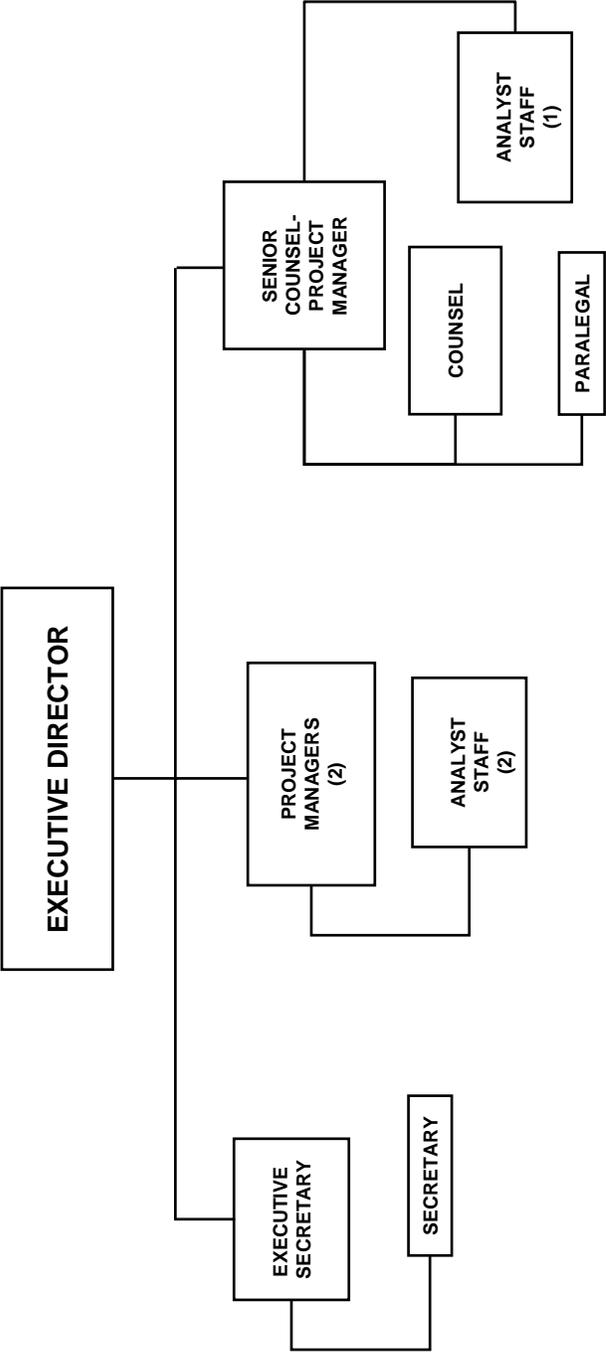
**EXPENDITURES**

During fiscal year 2014-15, the Committee spent \$1,379,314.

**STAFF TRAINING**

To maintain and enhance professional proficiency, the LB&FC staff is encouraged to participate in continuing education and training. In 2015, LB&FC auditing staff attended training in areas such as: cataloguing the catacombs: protecting and managing Commonwealth intellectual property, the OGC University 2015, and mediation at the Board of Claims.

**LEGISLATIVE BUDGET AND FINANCE COMMITTEE**



## SUMMARIES OF LB&FC REPORTS COMPLETED IN 2015

The LB&FC is charged with conducting informational and evaluative studies and performance audits as directed by the Committee and as mandated by the General Assembly. Further, the Committee is charged to:

. . . make reports, from time to time, to the members of the Legislature and, upon request, to the standing committees of the Senate and House of Representatives with respect to any of

its findings and recommendations...

Fourteen reports were completed and released in 2015. Summaries of these reports are located on the following pages. Copies of reports can be obtained by contacting our office at 717-783-1600 or 717-787-5487 (fax). Full reports and one-page fact sheets are also available for recent reports via the Committee's website at: <http://lbfc.legis.state.pa.us>.

## Pennsylvania Department of Transportation

**RELEASE DATE:** February 2015

report shows this anticipated spending by county.

**BACKGROUND:**

- Act 1981-35 required the LB&FC to conduct a performance audit of the PA Department of Transportation (PennDOT) every six years. This, the sixth such review, focused on revenue and expenditure trends, performance measures, follow-up of recommendations made by the Transportation Funding Advisory Commission, and a review of PennDOT district offices.
- This 160-page report is divided into five major sections plus an appendix.

- **PennDOT's performance measures provide a historical record of performance, but are difficult to interpret because PennDOT does not set performance goals.** The report contains historical information on a variety of PennDOT's performance measures.

**SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- **Motor License Fund revenues, when adjusted for purchasing power, have been generally flat since FY 1991-92.** In FY 1991-92, Motor License Fund revenues totaled \$1.47 billion. In FY 2011-12, Motor License Fund revenues were \$2.41 billion. But when expressed in 1991 dollars, this represents virtually flat funding.
- **Over the next 12 years, PennDOT expects the new revenues generated by Act 2013-89 to fund \$15.8 billion in additional highway, bridge, and transit capital improvement projects.** This is almost twice the \$17.6 billion in projects that could have been funded without the new revenues. The

- **PennDOT reported that 72 percent of Pennsylvania's National Highway System non-interstate highways were in good or excellent condition (FY 2011-12).** This is an increase from 62 percent in FY 2004-05.

- **The percentage of mass transit income coming from passengers has decreased from about 44 percent of total revenue to 36 percent over the past 10 years.** Commonwealth funding increased from 46 percent to 48 percent, and federal funding increased from 1 percent to 8 percent.

- **PennDOT district office websites vary considerably in the content they provide. Recommendation:** PennDOT review district websites with the goal of providing consistent content and terminology across all districts.

- **Some PennDOT district office staffing functions appear to have little relationship to the level of activity within the district.** District 6-0, with a complement of 385, reported having 9 human resources personnel, or a ratio

of 1 HR staff to every 43 employees. District 5-0, with a complement of only 232, also reported having 9 HR staff, a ratio of 1 HR staff to every 26 employees. Similar variations were found in permitting staff. **Recommendation:** We recommend PennDOT review its district office staffing levels against key activity levels and make adjustments as indicated.

- **We compared PennDOT's central and district office structure to three other large state agencies (the Departments of Environmental Protection, Labor & Industry, and Human Services).** The departments vary, with DEP and L&I appearing to have more functions carried out at central office, and PennDOT and DHS allowing greater autonomy at the district level. It was not clear, however, that PennDOT's overall operations could be improved by greater centralization.
- **PennDOT district office expenditures vary widely in some categories.** District spending on such items as gas, training, office equipment, and food varied more than would be expected based on staff size. **Recommendation:** PennDOT's fiscal office review district expenditures and follow-up in those areas where expenditures appear unusual. PennDOT Central Office should also ensure that its accounting manuals are clear in how these expenditures should be classified and reported.
- **PennDOT's workload balancing initiative may be a model for district office restructuring.** This model, now being used for highway and bridge design, may be useful in optimizing staff

in other areas, such as permitting, where an on-the-ground presence is not necessary.

- **PennDOT has fully or partially implemented 18 of the 26 Transportation Funding Advisory Commission recommendations.** The report contains a chart listing each recommendation and a brief comment regarding our assessment of its level of implementation.

## Dental Services for Persons With Disabilities

**RELEASE DATE:** February 2015

**BACKGROUND:**

- Senate Resolution 2013-61 called on the LB&FC to conduct a study of dental care for Pennsylvanians with disabilities and to make recommendations to preserve and improve the quality of such care.
- This 63-page report is divided into two major sections plus appendices.

**SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- **Comprehensive dental services are generally available to children with disabilities.** Children who are enrolled in Medical Assistance (MA), Pennsylvania's Medicaid program, are eligible for the Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnosis, and Treatment program which provides comprehensive health care, including dental care. Due to Pennsylvania's "Loophole Category," almost all children with a serious disability qualify for MA. Children enrolled in the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) also receive dental services.
- **Adults with disabilities are much less likely to qualify for comprehensive dental services.** While states are required to provide dental care for children covered under Medicaid, dental services for adults is optional. Penn-

sylvania does include some dental services as part of its MA program for adults, but the Department of Human Services (DHS) significantly scaled back the level of benefits in 2011.

- **The federal Affordable Care Act requires insurers to offer a dental plan, but does not require consumers to purchase it.** This should allow broader coverage for persons with disabilities who purchase a dental plan.
- **Thirty of Pennsylvania's 67 counties had no dentists in the MA fee-for-service plan that were willing or able to accept a special needs patient.** Dentists who are enrolled in a state Medicaid plan indicate on a federal website whether they can accommodate special needs patients and if they are accepting new Medicaid patients. Of the 1,819 Pennsylvania dentists enrolled as a MA fee-for-service provider, only 148 (8 percent) indicated they could accommodate special needs patients, and of those, only 107 were accepting new patients.
- **Pennsylvania is home to many clinics that provide free or low-cost dental services to persons with disabilities.** Pennsylvania has over 200 Federally Qualified Health Care Centers across the state, 84 of which offer dental services. The Pennsylvania Dental Association participates in the Donated Dental Services program that recruits dentists to provide services to the disabled and certain other vulnerable patients. Pennsylvania's three dental

schools operate clinics that provide services to persons with disabilities, as does the Elwyn Institute. Special Smiles Ltd. is an innovative program that provides comprehensive dental services to persons with disabilities enrolled in several Medicaid Managed Care Organizations (MCOs) in the Philadelphia region.

- **Pennsylvania dentists report that providing dental services to persons with disabilities is a multi-faceted problem.** We surveyed all 8,100 active Pennsylvania dentists and received 684 responses. The top factors reported as affecting dental care for persons with disabilities were: low MA reimbursement rates, difficult behavioral issues, and high levels of no-show appointments. Many also cited that the MA program does not cover needed services, burdensome MA rules that discourage provider participation, and lack of training and/or specialized equipment.

#### **Recommendations:**

- DHS revert to pre-2011 Medicaid dental regulations with regard to the type and frequency of services allowed for adults with disabilities.
- DHS allow dentists to receive Medicaid reimbursement for key preventative services at a greater frequency than for the general Medicaid population.
- DHS increase the amount of the Medicaid Dental Behavioral Management supplement and the number of supplements allowed.
- DHS build on the Special Smiles model to help establish specialty dental clinics in other areas of the Commonwealth.

- DHS work with its Medicaid MCOs to allow reimbursement to dental facilities treating special needs patients who are living in residential facilities outside their Medicaid MCO's geographic boundaries.
- The Pennsylvania Developmental Disabilities Council take the lead in meeting with representatives of Pennsylvania's three dental schools to explore the training needs identified by Pennsylvania dentists.

## Funding of County Probation Services

**RELEASE DATE:** February 2015

**BACKGROUND:**

- House Resolution 2014-619 called on the LB&FC to conduct a study of the costs and services of Pennsylvania's county probation and parole (hereafter shortened to probation) system.
- This 96-page report is divided into five major sections plus appendices.

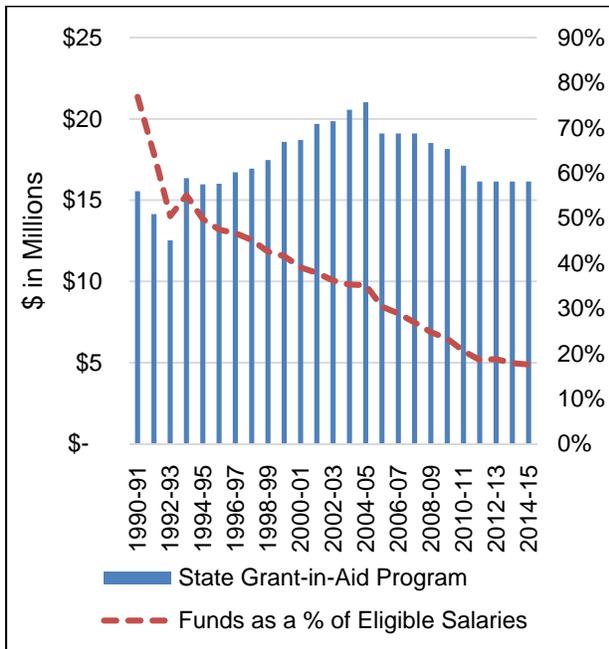
**SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- **Most (86 percent) of Pennsylvania's probation cases are under county jurisdiction.** County probation offices supervised 233,345 offenders, compared to 39,036 offenders at the state level.
- **Turnover rates for county probation officers averaged 6.0 percent in 2011.** This is down from 7.8 percent in the late 1990s.
- **Many new responsibilities have been placed on county probation offices in the last 10 years, with little or no additional funding.** Actuarial risk assessments—a time-consuming requirement—is likely to soon become another unfunded mandate for county offices.
- **The percentage of county funds used to support county probation offices has been increasing.** In FY

2013-14, county funds comprised 58 percent of total funding for county probation offices, compared to 45 percent in FY 1998-99.

- **Average caseloads have fallen from 117 active cases per probation officer in 2002 to 113 in 2013.**
- **The number of felons in the county probation and parole system has increased from 55,650 in 2002 to 74,971 in 2013.**
- **Evidence-based practices hold the promise of lowering recidivism rates.** Almost all counties have implemented at least some evidence-based practices, but are limited by resource constraints.
- **The statutory requirement that half the monies counties collect in supervision fees be sent to the Commonwealth is unnecessary.** These funds are returned back to counties on a dollar-per-dollar basis later in the year. This transfer creates paperwork burdens and can also present a misleading picture of how much state support counties receive.
- **The percentage of supervision fees actually collected varies widely from county to county.** Some counties reported collecting about 25 percent of the supervision fees they assess, while others reported collecting 90 percent or more.

- **State Grant-in-Aid funding has declined markedly in the last 10 years, both in real dollars and as a percentage of eligible salaries.** State law targets Grant-in-Aid funding at 80 percent of eligible county salaries. Grant-in-Aid funding was close to this goal in the late 1980s, but by FY 2014-15, had fallen to only 17.6 percent (see graph).



## Recommendations

- **The Grant-In-Aid program be re-defined and re-purposed to better encourage evidence-based practices.** This would require a statutory change.
- **Counties be allowed to retain 100 percent of the supervision fees they collect.** This would require a statutory change, but might encourage improved efforts to collect the fees.
- **The Executive Budget document better identify the amount of Grant-in-Aid funds that go to counties.**
- **The General Assembly may wish to revisit the Justice Reinvestment Initiative legislation.** The Justice Reinvestment Initiative as was enacted in 2012 is projected to yield much less in reinvestable savings for county probation offices than would have been possible under the original proposal.

## Impact of Slots Gaming on the Pennsylvania State Lottery

**RELEASE DATE:** 2015

**BACKGROUND:**

- As a major new entrant into the state's gaming market, many believed that slots gaming could adversely affect sales of the Pennsylvania State Lottery. Recognizing this concern, Act 2004-71 requires the LB&FC to issue annual reports to the General Assembly analyzing the impact, if any, of implementing slots gaming on the Pennsylvania State Lottery.
- This memo report is three pages in length.

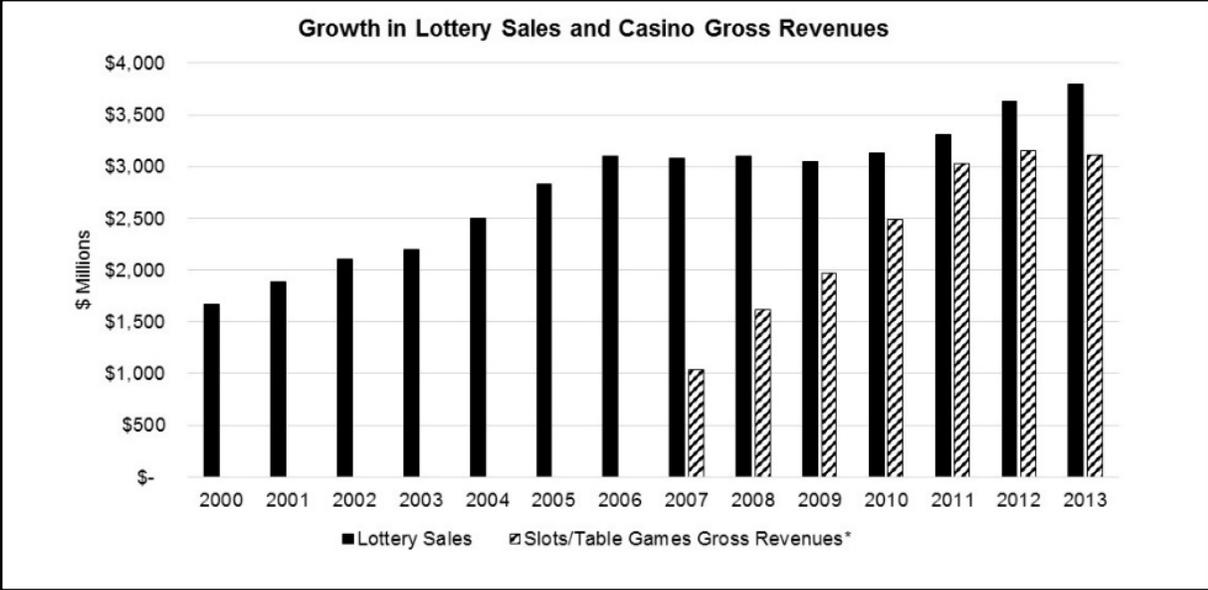
**SUMMARY OF FINDINGS:**

- **Twelve slots gaming facilities are now operating in the Commonwealth.** The first slots parlor opened in November 2006, the most recent in July 2013. All 12 gaming facilities offer table games.
- **Despite rapid growth in casino wagering, Lottery sales remained stable during the initial years and have increased significantly during the past three years.** Part of the slowdown in Lottery sales in the years following the introduction of casinos can be attributed to the rapid growth of sales in the early 2000s. This growth was due to the substantial expansion of the Lottery retailer network

and Pennsylvania's entry into the multi-state Powerball jackpot game.

Lottery sales increased by 5.3 percent in 2011, 9.9 percent in 2012, and 4.4 percent in 2013 indicating the impact of casinos on Lottery sales may be less significant than the initial data suggested.

- **A strong positive correlation exists between Lottery sales and casino revenues.** While it would seem unlikely that increased casino revenues would be a factor causing increased Lottery sales, the strong positive correlation (.78) would at least suggest that increased casino revenues are not negatively affecting Lottery sales to any significant degree.



## **Impact of Act 2012-207 on Access to Retail Pharmacies and Cost of Prescription Medications**

**RELEASE DATE:** April 2015

**BACKGROUND:**

- In an effort to provide greater consumer access to retail pharmacies and a “level playing field” for retail and mail order pharmacies, in 2012, the Pennsylvania General Assembly adopted Act 207. The Act prohibits state-licensed health plans that provide prescription drug benefits from requiring consumers to obtain prescription medications through mail order pharmacies and provides that consumer copayments and coinsurance be the same for retail and mail order pharmacies. Such requirements apply only if the retail pharmacy agrees to the same terms and conditions that are in place for the mail order pharmacy.
- This 33-page report is divided into two major sections plus appendices.

**SUMMARY OF FINDINGS:**

- **According to the National Community Pharmacists Association, Pennsylvania is one of eight states that have attempted to limit the required use of mail order pharmacies.** Such laws apply to state-licensed insurers in five states (Connecticut, Hawaii, Maryland, New York, and Pennsylvania), employers in two states (Arkansas and Louisiana) and certain state health benefit plans in one state (Texas). In states

with such laws, their impact has been limited due to their limited applicability. As in Pennsylvania, such laws do not apply to “health coverage” benefits available through federal programs such as Medicare and self-insured trusts and legally permitted employer welfare arrangements, which are governed under various federal laws. Nationwide, over 60 percent of workers receive coverage through such plans.

- **The Pennsylvania Insurance Department (PID) received relatively few Act 207 consumer complaints (i.e., 36) from March 2013, when it was implemented, through November 2014.** The PID investigated each complaint. It found many were from consumers enrolled in Medicare and self-funded plans that are not covered by Act 207. Others involved retail pharmacies reporting they could not agree to meet the conditions or pricing offered by the insurer or the insurer’s pharmacy benefit manager for a mail order pharmacy.
- **Three-quarters (101 of 132 respondents representing about 1,000 independent and chain retail pharmacies) of those responding to an LB&FC survey reported that they had applied to offer medication dispensing under Act 207, but only about half of those that applied were approved.** Typically, those not approved reported they did not meet the insurer’s mail order

pharmacy network requirements. Several respondents reported withdrawing their application after becoming familiar with the insurer or its pharmacy benefit manager requirements.

teeth,” or was not enforced in the light of legislative intent.

- **Over 80 percent of survey respondents who participate in Act 207, including all participating chain pharmacy respondents, reported they planned to continue to participate in the program in the upcoming year.** The primary reason given by those who indicated they would not continue to participate is the program’s failure to cover their drug acquisition and dispensing costs.
- **About half of the retail pharmacies responding to our survey and participating in Act 207 think consumer out-of-pocket costs have remained the same or decreased (from under \$10 to greater than \$10 for a 90-day drug supply).** None of the state’s major health insurers reported incurring material cost as a result of Act 207. One noted the costs associated with implementation typically involves the provider credentialing process, which are costs incurred with or without Act 207. The absence of widespread implementation of the Act, however, provides little opportunity to fully assess its impact on the cost of medication services.
- **For the most part, retail pharmacists expressed disappointment with the implementation of the Act in view of its original legislative intent.** Those responding to our survey typically indicated that the Act, while well intentioned, was ignored, “lacked

## The Feasibility of an Alternative Method for Authorizing Charter Schools in Pennsylvania

**RELEASE DATE:** April 2015

**BACKGROUND:**

- Senate Resolution 2014-414 calls on the LB&FC to conduct a study of alternative methods of authorizing charter schools, which are currently authorized by school districts. We did not consider alternative authorizers for cyber charter schools, which are authorized by the Pennsylvania Department of Education.
- This 101-page report is divided into six major sections plus appendices.

**SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- **Since 1997, when public charter schools were first authorized, Pennsylvania has experienced steady growth in charter schools and charter school students.** Pennsylvania has 159 approved brick and mortar charter schools, 10 regional charter schools and 14 cyber charter schools with about 130,000 total enrolled students. Most (60 percent) charter schools are authorized by either the Philadelphia or Pittsburgh school districts.
- **Fourteen states allow independent charter boards and 18 states allow institutions of higher education to authorize charter schools.** In Pennsylvania, brick-and-mortar charter

schools can only be authorized by local school districts or, upon appeal, by the Charter School Appeal Board.

- **Authorizers are funded in a variety of ways.** Of the 43 states that have charter school laws, only 27 specifically provide for authorizer funding, with most of these allowing authorizers to charge 0.5 percent to 5 percent of per pupil funding. In states that do not address authorizer funding (including Pennsylvania), the function is funded by the parent organization (generally an LEA—local education agency).
- **The National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA) believes charter schools should have a choice of at least two authorizing options.** Alternative authorizers can prevent hostile authorizers from blocking good applicants or closing successful schools. An alternative authorizer also gives states the ability to sanction an authorizer without eliminating all authorizing activity in that district.
- **NACSA's first choice for an alternative authorizer is an Independent Charter Board (ICB).** NACSA supports statewide ICBs because they can focus solely on charter school authorizing and can be of sufficient size to provide the infrastructure necessary to support high-quality authorizing. If an ICB is not possible, NACSA

recommends states allow higher education institutions (HEI) to be alternative authorizers.

- **Studies find little relationship between type of authorizer and the quality of charter schools.** While this has not been an area of extensive study, four studies that address this issue all came to a similar conclusion: while the authorizer type (e.g., LEA, SEA—state education agency, ICB, or HEI) may be a factor contributing to the variation in performance among charter schools, it does not appear to be a particularly important factor.
- **SR 414 calls on the LB&FC to develop a pilot program to allow institutions of higher education (HEIs) to authorize charter schools.** The key features of such a pilot program are presented in Chapter VI of the report.
- **Pennsylvania HEIs appear to have limited interest in becoming charter school authorizers.** At our request, the Association of Independent Colleges and Universities of Pennsylvania and the State System of Higher Education surveyed their institutions to gauge their interest in becoming a charter school authorizer. Only a small number of these institutions indicated such interest.

### **Recommendations:**

If the General Assembly desires to establish alternative authorizers for brick-and-mortar charter schools, we recommend it:

- **Consider allowing institutions of higher education to authorize charter schools, at least on a pilot**

**basis.** The outline of a possible pilot program to allow HEI authorizers is presented in Chapter VI of this report.

- **Consider establishing an Independent Charter Board.** We estimate the cost of an ICB to be about \$350,000 annually, assuming the Pennsylvania Department of Education provides IT and certain other administrative support.
- **Require alternative authorizers to apply nationally recognized standards in authorizing a charter school.** Seventeen states require authorizers to use nationally recognized standards, and such a requirement should help alleviate LEA concerns over new alternative authorizers.

## The Commonwealth's Network of Elder Abuse Task Forces

**RELEASE DATE:** June 2015

**BACKGROUND:**

- House Resolution 2014-929 directs the LB&FC to study Pennsylvania's existing elder abuse task forces (EATFs) and assess the feasibility of expanding them statewide. The Pennsylvania Department of Aging (PDA) works closely with Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs), which are responsible for investigating elder abuse reports and assisting their victims, and Temple University, which provides required training for protective service workers and supervisors and works collaboratively with local AAAs to establish EATFs. In 2014, EATFs came to the attention of the Pennsylvania Supreme Court's Elder Law Task Force, though at the time, limited information was available about them.
- This 77-page report is divided into two major sections plus appendices.

**SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- **The National Adult Protective Services Association (NAPSA) and the National Center for State Courts (NCSC) endorse multidisciplinary teams or task forces to more effectively address elder abuse given the complexity of such cases and the many diverse, though complementary, programs existing to ad-**

**dress it.** Such task forces may include aging and disability networks, mental and physical health providers, domestic and sexual assault programs, law enforcement agencies, and the courts. They may elect to perform various roles, such as review of specific cases to coordinate investigations and care planning or public awareness and professional training.

- **Most state adult protective service programs have multidisciplinary teams or task forces, but only seven (Colorado, Florida, Iowa, New Mexico, Oregon, Texas and Wyoming) have a statutory mandate.** In such states, state employees typically conduct investigations. Task force mandates also do not always apply statewide—52 of Pennsylvania's 67 counties, for example, would not meet Texas' population threshold for a required team.
- **Almost 80 percent of Pennsylvania's older adults reside in counties with an EATF that includes prosecutors and law enforcement.** Counties without an EATF are mostly rural and less populous (13 have fewer than 10,000 older adults). They report having established cooperative relationships with their courts, district attorney's (DA) offices, local law enforcement, and community health and human service providers, with more than one-third indicating there is no current need for an EATF.

- **All task forces have AAA directors and/or protective service supervisors and DAs or their staff as members. About 80 percent also have law enforcement officers.** Only three (Cambria, Huntingdon, and Montgomery) include local judges, which is not surprising as NCSC emphasizes courts should not participate in EATFs that investigate abuse or design care plans. About half of Pennsylvania's task forces focus on such activities.
- **Typically, AAA and/or DA offices coordinate EATFs, with multiple agencies sharing such responsibilities for over half of them.** Activities are performed on a "volunteer" basis by about two-thirds of the EATFs. One county (Washington) has full-time EATF staff. About 30 percent of counties without EATFs see limited protective service and law enforcement staff time as an obstacle to EATF formation.
- **With a few notable exceptions (Montgomery and Schuylkill) only limited funding (mostly state Lottery funds) is available for EATF activities, such as public awareness and professional training.** Federal Title VII funds for prevention of elder abuse, such as supporting multidisciplinary elder justice activities, are limited. In FFY 2014, Pennsylvania received \$242,944, which is less than its 2004 allotment, and less than what it expends to support Temple's work. NAPSA has recommended Congress set aside funds under the Victims of Crime Act for adult protective services similar to what occurs for child abuse.

#### Recommendations:

- PDA continue to support voluntary EATFs to address local needs.
- PDA and the courts consider a statewide elder abuse public awareness campaign involving the judiciary.
- PDA advocate for increased federal funding for prevention of elder abuse, neglect, and exploitation.

## Pennsylvania Game Commission Compliance With Its Strategic Plan

**RELEASE DATE:** June 2015

### **BACKGROUND:**

- A 1998 amendment to the Game and Wildlife Code requires that the LB&FC conduct a performance audit every three years of the Pennsylvania Game Commission's (PGC's) compliance with its strategic plan for agency operations. This is the sixth report issued under this mandate. The report also addresses PGC revenues, expenditures, and the Game Fund financial condition.
- This 37-page report is divided into three major sections plus an appendix.

### **SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- **The PGC 2009-2014 Strategic Plan is sufficiently defined to allow an independent assessment.** Although not the case until 2012, we believe the PGC objectives are sufficiently defined and adequate data exists for us to independently assess—at least in broad terms—compliance with the Strategic Plan. The assessment still, however, requires a substantial degree of subjective judgment because very few of the objectives are specific, quantifiable, or time-limited. As a consequence, we could only “grade” the extent to which an objective was achieved in broad categories (i.e., Fully or Largely Achieved, Partially Achieved, or Not Achieved or Largely Not Achieved).
- **Six of the PGC's seven broad goals were rated as Partially Achieved; one was rated as Fully or Largely Achieved.** In addition to the seven broad goals, the Strategic Plan contains 41 Strategic Objectives. Of these 41 objectives, we rated 11 as Fully or Largely Achieved, 27 as Partially Achieved, 3 as Not Achieved or Largely Not Achieved. Each rating has a brief explanation.
- **We rated the PGC's deer management objective as Fully or Largely Achieved.** The PGC's deer plan calls for stable populations in 20 of the 23 Wildlife Management Units, an increase in 1 WMU, and a decrease in 2 WMUs. Actual population trends match the PGC's objective in all but 7 WMUs. In 4 of those WMUs, the deer population trend is increasing whereas the goal is to stabilize the population; in 2 WMUs, the trend is stable whereas the goal is to decrease the population; and in 1 WMU the population is stable whereas the goal is an increase.
- **Bobwhite quail and black ducks were the two game species where we rated the goal to conserve, protect, and restore as Not Achieved or Largely Not Achieved.** Bobwhite quail populations have declined by 97 percent and black ducks, once abundant, are now down to fewer than 500 pairs in Pennsylvania.

- **The PGC’s objective to Increase Hunter Recruitment was Partially Achieved.** General hunting licenses increased from 948,323 in FY 2008-09 to 952,989 in FY 2013-14, but fell back to 943,811 in FY 2014-15. New hunters are up from 30,213 in 2009 to 41,462 in 2014. Sales of junior hunting licenses are also up, from 85,698 in 2010 to 89,600 in 2013.
- **The PGC’s efforts to improve forest health through its deer management plan does not appear to have been effective, at least as yet.** There has been little or no change over the past 8 years in the number of WMUs with improved forest health, with 2014 measurements matching the average for the 8-year period (i.e., 1 WMU rated good; 15 WMUs, fair; and 4 WMUs, poor).

its Annual Report an easy-to-understand assessment (perhaps along the lines of this report) of the extent to which the plan’s objective were achieved that year.

**Recommendations:**

- **The PGC consider streamlining its Strategic Plan.** Streamlining the plan to a more manageable number of objectives and measures should make it easier for both the PGC and the public to understand the plan and assess results.
- **The PGC strive to develop objectives that are time-limited and quantifiable.** We recommend the PGC develop time-limited, quantifiable objectives wherever possible.
- **The PGC should attempt to assess the extent to which they are achieving the objectives of the Strategic Plan in a way that would be meaningful to the public.** We recommend the PGC consider including as part of

## Family Caregivers in Pennsylvania's Home and Community-Based Waiver Programs

**RELEASE DATE:** June 2015

**BACKGROUND:**

- House Resolution 241 calls on the LB&FC to conduct a study of the extent to which paid family caregivers can provide services in Pennsylvania's Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) waiver programs. The report is also to identify any barriers to expanding paid family caregiving in HCBS waiver programs.
- This 40-page report is divided into five major sections plus appendices.

**SUMMARY OF FINDINGS:**

- **Providing care for a chronically ill, disabled, or aged family member can place a major burden on the caregiver.** More than one in six Americans working full- or part-time report assisting with the care of an elderly or disabled family member or friend. The value of informal family caregiving has been estimated at \$450 billion in 2011. This care often comes at a substantial personal cost, however, with a reported 37 percent of caregivers having to quit their jobs or reduce their work hours to care for someone aged 50 or older.
- **Pennsylvania has established ten HCBS waiver programs.** The goal of these programs is to provide home and community-based services to

Medicaid-eligible individuals who would otherwise require institutional services.

- **Generally, federal regulations preclude legally responsible individuals, such as a spouse or the parent of a minor child, from serving as paid caregivers in HCBS waiver programs.** Certain other family members, such as an adult child or the parent of an adult beneficiary, can be paid caregivers in many, but not all, of Pennsylvania's HCBS waiver programs.
- **Legally responsible relatives, including spouses, can be paid for personal care services when such services are deemed as extraordinary care, but relatively few states allow this option.** The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) has adopted a policy allowing legally responsible individuals, including spouses, to be paid for providing "extraordinary care" if such a provision is included in an approved HCBS waiver. Several states, including Arizona, Colorado, and Oregon, allow for such payments. Pennsylvania allows spouses to be paid for a limited number of services (e.g., home and community habilitation) in some of its waiver programs, but not to the extent of these other states.
- **Family caregivers in Pennsylvania's HCBS waiver programs can**

**receive a maximum of \$3.35 to \$4.00 per 15 minute unit when providing personal assistance services, but the number of units are limited.** Pennsylvania has three wage and benefit ranges depending on geographic area.

- **The Department of Human Services (DHS) collects only limited data on the extent to which paid family caregivers are used in Pennsylvania's HCBS waiver programs, but the percentage of paid caregivers who are family members appears to range from 4 percent to 40 percent.** Of the five waiver programs operated through DHS's Office of Long-Term Living, an average of 40 percent (about 15,600 caregivers) were family caregivers as follows: 4 percent were siblings; 5 percent were parents; 15 percent were another relative (other than a spouse); and 16 percent were adult children of a beneficiary.
- **Some states (but not Pennsylvania), have established 100 percent state-funded programs that allow legally responsible family members to be paid caregivers.** Twenty-one states have established state-funded programs that allow payments to family members to provide care to elderly or disabled relatives, including 12 states that allow payments to spouses and parents of minor children.
- **The use of paid family caregivers has raised concerns, particularly regarding the potential for fraud and abuse.** Paying family members to be caregivers can help overcome

some of the challenges people face finding qualified, reliable, and continuous caregivers. However, family members often have access to financial and other personal data that would not generally be available to an agency-sponsored caregiver. There may also be a higher degree of trust between a beneficiary and a family member that could be exploited by an unscrupulous family caregiver. CMS requires states to take steps to address these issues, but family members are the largest category of financial exploiters of the elderly, so the concerns are warranted.

**Department of Human Services' Implementation of the  
*Olmstead* Decision**

**RELEASE DATE:** September 2015

**BACKGROUND:**

- House Resolution 2014-903 directed the LB&FC to assess the Department of Human Services' (DHS) implementation of the 1999 U.S. Supreme Court ruling in *Olmstead v. L.C.*, as it relates to individuals with intellectual disabilities (IID) and the provision of home and community-based services (HCBS).
- This 76-page report is divided into five major sections plus appendices.

**SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- ***Olmstead* held that individuals with disabilities have a right to receive care in a community-based setting.** Public entities are required to provide community-based services when (1) appropriate; (2) the affected persons do not oppose such treatment; and (3) those services can be reasonably accommodated.
- **Prior to *Olmstead*, DHS was transitioning ID services from institutional to community settings.** From the mid-1980s through 1999, nine state centers/units for ID were closed; two state centers and one ID unit were closed since 1999. DHS currently operates five state centers.

- **DHS considers the *Benjamin Settlement Agreement* to be its *Olmstead* plan for IID.** The *Benjamin Settlement Agreement* provides a plan to transition up to 230 state center residents into community placements by June 2018, a process that is already underway. Class members that do not want to move into a community-based setting may choose to remain in a state center. The Agreement does not, however, provide for continuing transitions to community placements after 2018 and is silent on new admissions. From July 2012 through March 2015, 23 individuals were admitted to state centers. As of 2013, 27 states had *Olmstead* Plans.

- **In 2014-15, expenditures at state centers averaged \$330,223 per resident, 7 times the average cost of care for residents in community settings.** Costs for state center residents can be expected to be higher than community-based costs since 88 percent of current state center residents have a severe or profound level of a disability, compared to 16 percent of HCBS clients. Private intermediate care facilities for individuals with intellectual disabilities (ICFs/IID), whose residents are more comparable to state centers, had costs averaging \$145,170 per resident. Looked at differently, state centers accounted for 11 percent of total ID expenditures, but served only 2 percent of the ID population.

- **Funding and restrictive regulations reportedly have slowed growth in HCBS.** In particular, issues with Chapter 51 regulations, delays in processing PROMISe applications, limited funding for start-up costs, and restrictive service definitions have been cited.
- **The remaining state centers may have only modest economic development potential, but significant operating cost savings could be achieved.** State centers that have closed have been sold to private concerns, repurposed for state use, or remained unused awaiting sale or other use. Staff from these facilities have transferred to similar positions in other state centers or agencies, retired, or accepted furloughs. Although the economic development agencies we contacted were unable to provide us with the potential economic value of the sites, given the largely rural locations of the five state centers, we believe their economic development potential should be considered modest. However, due to their high operating costs, we estimate that DHS would save approximately \$175 million annually if all state centers were closed and ownership transferred (i.e., no maintenance costs to DHS). In Maryland, funds saved from closing state centers were dedicated to the community-based system. In Pennsylvania, a similar approach was taken with the Justice Reinvestment Fund (JRF) for savings generated by efforts to lower incarceration rates.

#### Recommendations:

- **The General Assembly consider monies saved due to the transitioning of residents of state centers to community services be retained for ID services, perhaps in a manner similar to the JRF.**
- **DHS: (a) Create an Olmstead Plan for the continued transition of state center residents to community placements. (b) Review state centers' operations to identify centers that could be consolidated. (c) Consider restricting new admissions to designated state centers. (d) Review the revised PROMISe approval process to ensure it has been successful in reducing processing times.**

## Adequacy of Fees Charged in PA's Instant Check System for Gun Purchases

**RELEASE DATE:** September 2015

**BACKGROUND:**

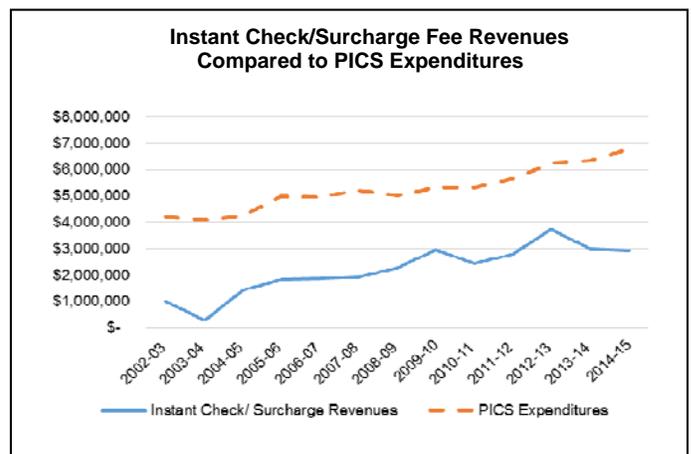
- Act 1995-17 requires the LB&FC to assess the adequacy of the \$5 fee (\$2 instant check fee and \$3 surcharge fee) charged to conduct a background check when purchasing a firearm in Pennsylvania. This system, known as PICS (Pennsylvania Instant Check System), can conduct an immediate background check on individuals who attempt to purchase a firearm, receive a firearm through a transfer, or apply for a license to carry a firearm. PICS is operated by the Pennsylvania State Police (PSP).
- This 42-page report is divided into four major sections plus appendices.

**SUMMARY OF FINDINGS:**

- **PICS underwent a major system upgrade in 2104.** This upgrade implemented a web-based option (previously the system was phone-based) that has eliminated busy signals and allows queuing and various automated and online management tools for dealers.
- **PICS handled 893,054 calls in 2014, 98 percent of which were approved during the first call.** Of those approved during the first call, 64 percent were approved through the phone or

Web automated systems and 34 percent were approved after being transferred to an operator.

- **Of the 13,178 calls that were initially denied, 4,345 were challenged, resulting in 1,439 being reversed.** Pennsylvania's initial denial rate of 1.5 percent is the same as the national rate.
- **The \$5 instant check fee/surcharge has generated revenue averaging about 50 percent of PICS expenditures.** However, firearm fee revenues have been trending downward in the past 3 fiscal years (from \$3.7 million in FY 2012-13 to \$2.9 million in FY 2014-15) while PICS expenditures have been trending upward (from \$6.3 million in FY 2012-13 to \$6.8 million in FY 2014-15). The shortfall is covered by General Fund appropriations.



- **To have fully funded the PICS program in FY 2013-14 and FY 2014-15, the \$5 combined instant check/surcharge fee would need to increase to approximately \$11.**
- **Pennsylvania is one of 13 states that use a state agency to conduct its background checks.** These 13 states are known as Point of Contact (POC) states. In 35 states and territories, the FBI (NICS) performs the background checks at no cost to the customer. We found, however, that firearm dealers often charge additional administrative fees ranging from \$5 to \$50 in both POC and non-POC states.
- **Instant check fees in POC states range from no fee (in two states) to \$25 (Nevada).**
- **PICS has several advantages over having to rely on the federal system (NICS).**

These include:

- At any given time, about 1,300 to 1,400 Protection from Abuse (PFA) orders lack sufficient numeric identifiers (e.g., SS#) to be entered into national data files. These PFAs can, however, be used in PICS to prevent firearm purchases.
- Federal policy requires firearms to be transferred after 3 business days if a potential denial situation cannot be resolved. As a POC state, Pennsylvania is allowed additional time to research checks

that cannot be resolved within this 3-day period.

- PICS has been used to help capture 1,818 (as of 2014) fugitives attempting to acquire a firearm. It is unlikely that would have occurred if Pennsylvania was not a POC state.
- The PSP can use PICS to conduct checks for law enforcement agencies attempting to return confiscated firearms to ensure the owners are allowed to possess firearms. NICS cannot be used for this purpose. The PSP has conducted nearly 6,000 such checks.
- In POC states, the decisions regarding who can possess a firearm are made at the state level, which many citizens prefer over having the federal government make these decisions.

## Feasibility and Cost Effectiveness Study: Merging Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Public School District Health Care Plans

**RELEASE DATE:** December 2015

**BACKGROUND:**

- Senate Resolution 2013-250 called on the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee (LB&FC) to conduct a study relating to the feasibility and cost effectiveness of merging public school district health care plans. The LB&FC contracted with PRM Consulting Group to conduct this study. The study’s findings are based on responses to a school district survey sent to all 500 public school districts, responses from 27 of the 37 healthcare consortiums, data from the major health insurers and input from key stakeholders.
- This 71-page report is divided into 14 major sections plus an appendix.

**SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- **Over 85 percent of school districts currently obtain healthcare coverage from one of 37 health trusts or consortia.** The consortia are local or regional covering school districts in one or more adjacent counties. The largest consortium, Allegheny County Schools Health Insurance Consortium includes 48 school districts and covers over 48,000 lives.

- **A statewide pharmacy program would save \$72 million in the first year of operation.** Carving out prescription drugs from the current health care plans and establishing a statewide pharmacy program with little to no change in benefits would yield savings of between \$100 and \$160 per person.
- **Other near-term savings opportunities exist if all school districts participated in a health trust or consortium and if a statewide re-insurance pool were established.** Combined with a carved-out pharmacy program, near-term savings are estimated to yield \$100 million per year.
- **A Statewide health care program could save over \$200 million per year after all school districts join.**

Projected Total Cost of Healthcare for All School Employees \$ Amounts in Millions				
Fiscal year	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
Baseline cost	\$2,937	\$3,093	\$3,260	\$3,439
Carved out pharmacy plan savings	\$74	\$78	\$82	\$87
Savings under statewide health and pharmacy plan covering all employees	\$107	\$147	\$191	\$216

- **Longer-term cost avoidance opportunities exist by forming**

**multiemployer health plans.** An excise tax (“the Cadillac tax”) on “high-cost” health plans will increase school district costs as governmental health plans are not exempted from the excise tax. Savings could be achieved by school districts if they joined multiemployer plans, as the threshold for the tax is higher under such plans, deferring when the tax would first be applicable by up to 7 years and reducing the tax payable by up to \$1,500 per school employee.

- **Comparison of coverage with average taxpayer and to Commonwealth employees.** Only 31 percent of Commonwealth taxpayers are enrolled in health plans at or above the platinum level, whereas 85 percent of school employees were enrolled in health plans at or above the platinum level. All Commonwealth employees are enrolled in health plans above the platinum level.

Plan Value	PA Taxpayer	Schools	PEBTF
Platinum plus	8%	71%	100%
Platinum	23%	14%	0%
Gold plus	17%	14%	0%
Gold	19%	1%	0%
Silver plus	11%	1%	0%
Silver	16%	0%	0%
Bronze & bronze plus	6%	0%	0%

On average, school district employees pay \$693 per year for single coverage and \$1,493 for other than single coverage. Commonwealth employees pay 5 percent of pay (reduced to 2 percent if enrolled in the “Get Healthy” program), regardless of how many family members are covered. On average, school employees

pay less than state employees for single coverage and more for family coverage.

**Recommendations:**

- Establish a statewide pharmacy program with two or three benefit levels to cover all school employees under a single competitively bid contract by carving pharmacy coverage out of the existing health plans.
- Create a statewide reinsurance program that consortia can use to purchase stop-loss insurance.
- Require all school districts to participate in a consortium.
- Establish one or more multiemployer trusts to mitigate the impact of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA) Excise Tax.

## Study of Family Work Support Programs

**RELEASE DATE:** December 2015

**BACKGROUND:**

- Senate Resolution 2013-62 directs the LB&FC to consider the effect of major federal and state programs in assisting low income families to achieve self-sufficient and, in particular, determine if and how such programs mitigate the “cliff effect.” “Cliff effects” occur when increased earnings are not sufficient to cover the cost of the lost benefit. Our study focused on programs available to all that meet eligibility requirements (i.e., TANF [Temporary Assistance to Needy Families], SNAP/Food Stamps [Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program], EITC [Earned Income Tax Credit], ACTC [Additional Child Tax Credit], and Pennsylvania’s Special Tax Forgiveness Program). Our one exception, the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF), offers child care subsidies but the number served is limited by available funding.
- This 82-page report is divided into two major sections plus appendices.

**SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- **Pennsylvania’s TANF and SNAP programs provide incentives and support for work.** These include training and employment services; allowances for transportation, tools, and equipment; and a 50 percent

earned income disregard when determining TANF continuing eligibility. Pennsylvania also extends SNAP benefits to families with gross income up to 160 percent (rather than 130 percent) of the federal poverty level (FPL), and 200 percent for households with an elderly/disabled member. It is one of only 16 states that guarantee child care for former TANF recipients who work.

- **Refundable federal EITC and ACTC tax credit programs help mitigate lost TANF and SNAP benefits for those who work.** In Pennsylvania, the maximum TANF benefit for a non-working single parent family with two children is equivalent to about 25 percent of FPL and about 55 percent when combined with the SNAP benefit. Working full-time at the minimum wage, the family no longer qualifies for TANF cash assistance but can still qualify for SNAP and the EITC and ACTC credits (and Pennsylvania Tax Forgiveness), bringing the household’s income with earning up to over 125 percent of the FPL.
- **Pennsylvania expends over \$600 million annually to provide child care subsidies to families with income up to 235 percent of FPL (i.e., \$45,896 for a three-person household in 2013).** In FFY 2014, Pennsylvania’s Child Care Works Program served over 155,000 children (about 22 percent of Pennsylvania children under age 12 living below 200 percent of FPL) and had a waiting list of about

6,700 children. About 25 percent receiving child care subsidies are former TANF families, and about 20 percent are families currently receiving TANF or SNAP.

- **Pennsylvania’s child care subsidy program includes several features that help ease low income families’ transition to self-sufficiency.** These include different eligibility thresholds for initial and continuing eligibility, a relatively high maximum income continuing eligibility threshold, and a family-level fixed dollar copay amount based on family size and income, with family copays comparable to the average national family’s costs relative to income.

- **Pennsylvania families can experience the “cliff effect” when child care benefits are lost (i.e., at 235 percent of FPL).** In 2013, a three-person family with earned income at 235 percent of FPL (\$45,896) could receive child care benefits worth \$17,111 annually. This falls to \$0 after the family exceeds the 235 percent threshold. To eliminate this “cliff,” Pennsylvania would need to substantially reduce its initial and continuing eligibility thresholds, base family copays on the total cost of a family’s child care, and/or substantially increase copayment amounts.

### **Recommendations for Additional Work Incentives**

- Change the TANF asset test to promote savings for unexpected expenses. Over 40 states have no or higher allowed asset limits than Pennsylvania.

- Increase the TANF earned income disregard from 50 percent to 75 percent to further smooth the transition to self-sufficiency.
- Continue the child care subsidy for SNAP only households, in particular those enrolled in community college priority job programs, through allowable SNAP retention activities.
- Continue to reduce the child care subsidy waiting list.

## Implementation of the Pennsylvania Safety in Youth Sports Act

**RELEASE DATE:** December 2015

### **BACKGROUND:**

- House Resolution 2014-1064 directed the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee to review the Commonwealth's program of providing intervention for student athletes who sustain a brain injury, as required under the Safety in Youth Sports Act, Act 2011-101.
- This 95-page report is divided into five major sections plus appendices.

### **SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATION:**

- **Between 2001 and 2012, the number of emergency room visits in the U.S. for sports and recreation-related traumatic brain injury increased by 144 percent for children between the ages of 10 to 19.** This increase (from 100,029 in 2001 to 244,332 in 2012) is attributed primarily to a greater awareness of the seriousness of concussions rather than an increase in the number of injuries.
- **Nationally, 14 deaths due to brain injury occurred in high school football between 2010 and 2014.** None of these deaths occurred in Pennsylvania. It does not appear that deaths due to brain injuries occurred in any other high school sport during this period.
- **Pennsylvania's Safety in Youth Sports Act (SYSA) contains many of the key provisions recommended as best practices when states first began enacting such legislation in 2009.** Virtually all states now have youth concussion laws. The three key provisions in state concussion laws are (1) education (athletes, parents, and coaches); (2) immediate removal from play when an athlete shows signs of a concussion; and (3) written permission from a medical professional before returning to play. Pennsylvania's SYSA has all three provisions.
- **Current best practices call for a graduated Return to Play (RTP) protocol.** Some states include a mandate for a graduated RTP protocol in their concussion statutes. But most states, including Pennsylvania, do not have such a requirement. A Return to Learn protocol, which recognizes the importance of a gradual return to academics, is required in two states.
- **Schools appear to have achieved a high level of compliance with the Pennsylvania SYSA.** In particular:
  - **Education.** The SYSA (and the Pennsylvania Interscholastic Athletic Association) requires student athletes and their parents to read and sign a concussion and traumatic brain injury information sheet. Our survey of school

athletic directors found that 89 percent of athletic directors indicated that they require students and parents to complete this sheet. Athletic directors also report virtually full compliance with the annual on-line concussion training required of coaches in the SYSA.

- **Removal From Play.** All (100 percent) school athletic directors reported that their coaches know that any student suspected of a concussion must be immediately removed from play. School athletic trainers were more divided, with 59 percent agreeing that coaches immediately remove from play any student suspected of a concussion and 42 percent responding “generally yes, but not always.”
- **Return to Play.** Ninety-nine percent of school athletic directors reported that all of their coaches know that any student suspected of a concussion cannot return to play until evaluated and cleared to return to play by an appropriate medical professional.
- **Athletic trainers and Brain Injury Coalition members made several recommendation for possible improvements to the Pennsylvania SYSA.** These suggestions, which include expanding the SYSA to cover community-based youth sports, more strenuous record-keeping and reporting requirements, and mandating Return to Learn protocols, are listed in the report.

### **Recommendation:**

- We recommend the Pennsylvania Department of Education expand its guidelines for managing concussions in a manner similar to the guidelines issued by the New York Department of Education.

**PROJECTS READY FOR RELEASE/IN PROCESS/ASSIGNED  
AT YEAR'S END**

**Performance Audit of the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission** – Act 2004-159 requires the LB&FC to conduct a performance audit of the PFBC by July 1, 2007, and every three years after that. The next audit is to be completed by mid-2016.

**Local Option Small Games of Chance Act** – Act 2013-90 requires an annual report beginning March 2016, analyzing the impact of Chapter 9, which relates to tavern gaming, on the State Lottery.

**Pennsylvania eHealth Partnership Authority** – Act 2012-121 (SB 8) establishes the Pennsylvania eHealth Partnership Authority and requires a study of the management, viability, and performance of the health information exchange. This authority expires five years after the effective date of the act. The report is due in July 2016.

**Compensation for Members of Boards and Commissions** – SR 138 calls for a study of Commonwealth expenditures for salaries and other compensation and benefits of members of state boards and commissions. This report is planned for release in early 2016.

**Privately Owned Veterans Care Facilities** – SR 171 calls for the LB&FC to conduct a study relating to the feasibility and cost-effectiveness of utilizing privately owned veterans care facilities to augment the Commonwealth's six state-owned veterans care facilities. This report is planned for release in mid-2016.

**Lyme Disease** – The LB&FC is called on to conduct an independent implementation cost analysis of recommendations contained in the “Lyme Disease In Pennsylvania” report issued by the task force on Lyme disease. This report is to be completed in 2016.

**After School Programs** – The members of the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee directed the staff to prepare an update on a 2009 report on the availability of after school programs within the Commonwealth, including types and locations of programs, geographical gaps, cost per child, and sources of public and private funding. The report is to be completed in 2016.

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Children's Trust Fund .....	November 1997
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Status Report on Pennsylvania's Weights and Measures Program .....	December 1995
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Preliminary Report on PA's Research and Development Tax Credit Program .....	July 2009
An Evaluation of the Keystone Opportunity Zone (KOZ) Program .....	July 2009
Pennsylvania Film Production Tax Credit and Industry Analysis.....	June 2009
Economic Impact of the Proposed Greater Hazleton Air Cargo Airport.....	June 2008
The Cost to PA's Economy Resulting From School Starting Before Labor Day.....	September 2006
Considerations for Regulating Surplus Accumulation and Community Benefit Activities of Pennsylvania's Blue Cross and Blue Shield Plans .....	June 2005
Pennsylvania's Workers' Compensation System Compared to Nearby States.....	February 2005
Study of the Pittsburgh Development Fund (PDF).....	May 2004
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