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WAYNE COUNTY PRESS RELEASE:

It is with regret that, due to the current Commonwealth budget impasse, Wayne County may be forced to reduce and/or interrupt some of the social services the County provides to our community's families by the end of December. **It is important to note however, that those receiving services covered by the Commonwealth's Medical Assistance (MA) programs will NOT BE affected**, as the Commonwealth has pledged to maintain funding for eligible persons participating in those programs.

During the next eight weeks, the County, and its Human Services Agency (HSA), will be planning for a staged and systematic approach to what may become a considerable reduction and/or shutdown of some services in the event the budget impasse is not resolved. However, it is our responsibility and it is prudent for us to provide sufficient notice to the many families, friends and neighbors who will be affected. The County will begin announcements during the month of November of any services which may be delayed, reduced and/or curtailed during the month of December, 2015. Advance notice will be given by the HSA to individuals and families for any delayed or interrupted services, to help them in planning for service interruptions. During that time, the HSA will also be notifying and working with HSA contracted community services providers so that we may work together and most effectively.

The Commonwealth's budget impasse has sorely strained the resources of our county and our local community resources as we have struggled to maintain uninterrupted services to local residents who are most vulnerable. Uninterrupted services have been possible due to limited support from the County, the Commonwealth, and our community.

However, as the end of the calendar year approaches, the County resources and the HSA reserves will dwindle. The modest incoming revenue we continue to receive will not be sufficient to continue indefinitely. If the Commonwealth does not pass a budget on or about December 1, 2015, so that funds may begin to flow to the county, the HSA will be

unable to continue to provide some services to Commonwealth funded programs greatly used by so many, with such positive effects for the entire community . Service interruption will have a considerable impact as all funding has the goal of helping people to remain independent, contributing members of our community, and keeping them out of more restrictive alternatives with higher costs, such as emergency rooms, physical and mental health hospitals, other institutions, and even prisons.

Without these services, now currently and unobtrusively being provided, those with mental health disorders may risk escalation of unacceptable private and public behaviors. Children and the elderly may be at higher risk for abuse and neglect. Those with addictive disease will more likely fail at recovery, leading to relapse and more costly rehabilitation measures. Some adults with intellectual disabilities may no longer be able to maintain their independence in the community and will be forced to live in an institutional setting. Children ages 0-3 years may not get the early intervention, which is critical, to correct speech and other delays; this will affect those children for life. Many senior citizens will not be able to use transportation services to get to medical appointments and food shopping. Many seniors will not receive the services that literally enable them to remain in their homes, such as personal care and meals, and senior centers may not be able to stay open.

It is of note that the Pennsylvania Lottery funds many Senior Citizen programs (i.e. senior centers meals and programs, senior transportation, home-delivered meals and personal care services provided to seniors in their homes so they may remain at home). Lottery funding the County receives from the Commonwealth is NOT generated through tax dollars, but through PA Lottery ticket sales. In the past, these considerable funds have been forwarded to the counties regardless of the Commonwealth's budget status. However, when this budget impasse began, authority to release the Lottery funds after July 1, 2015, was not given to the Commonwealth Treasury. Therefore, no lottery funding has been available to counties since July 1, 2015.

People are still buying Lottery tickets, and sales revenues are building up. As a practical matter, these funds might be able to be released, regardless of the budget stalemate, if spending authority is granted by the Commonwealth to the Treasury. Wayne County and its older population would be extremely appreciative if this could be accomplished, as the HSA will then be able to maintain current services to senior citizens uninterrupted.

The County encourages interested parties to contact our Governor and all state legislators to urge that (1) a budget compromise be reached; and (2) that, separate and distinct from the impasse negotiations, the Lottery funds held and being accrued by the Commonwealth be authorized to be released to counties immediately. These two actions will avoid a huge adverse impact on our families and in our community.

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