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Good Morning, my name is Michael D. Donahue and I am the Wyoming County Human Services Executive Director. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Senator Lisa Baker and all the members of the Senate Committees on Health and Human Services, Aging and Youth, and Intergovernmental Operations as well as the Health and Human Services sub-committee of the Appropriations Committee for conducting this Hearing. The review of the impact of the proposed consolidation of Departments of Health, Human Services, Aging and Drug and Alcohol Programs into a unified Department of Health and Human Services is vital to assure that individuals in need of such services are not harmed.

As the current Wyoming County Human Services Executive Director, the former Luzerne County Division Head of Human Services and the former Luzerne -Wyoming Counties Drug and Alcohol Program Administrator, I have seen continued devastation caused by heroin and opioid usage and the critical social issues caused by this severe epidemic in northeast Pennsylvania. The total impact on our community and how it affects the other service delivery systems such as Aging and Youth and Health and Human Services is yet to be determined. The fact that there are so many Senators and Community Leaders present today to review this matter is encouraging. It is my hope that with a thorough review and discussion we can do what is best for the individuals and families we serve.

In preparation for this hearing, I asked the Stakeholders group what their greatest concerns are with the proposed departments' merger. The following concerns were listed:

Provider Groups:

- How will a Unified Department of Health and Human Services ensure that Clinical Integrity Driven Funding Policies are maintained? Will this unified Department lead to Funding Driven policy establishment instead?
- How will a Unified Department assured the high quality of care which is monitoring in PA through the current service specific licensing processes?
- What are the staffing benefits from merging the current departments?
- What do you think is the most effective status for the State Department of Drug & Alcohol Programs which lead the drug and alcohol abuse prevention and treatment efforts dealing with an epidemic in the state? Is it as deputate or as a shared deputate among 10 other deputates?
- How many meetings did the Department of Drug & Alcohol Programs have with the Department of Human Services to develop Centers of Excellence?
- What will happen to the current county-based prevention and treatment planning processes which are managed and protected by DDAP and delivered locally by our Single County Authorities (SCA) system?
- How many meetings were held with the current Departments to plan the establishment of a Unified Health and Human Services Department?

Recovery/Advocacy Groups:

- If DDAP is merged what is left of a voice for drug and alcohol Recovery in the midst of a Unified Department of Health and Human Services?
- Drug and alcohol dependence is a primary medical condition, work is underway to define and expand drug and alcohol peer support services to augment and strengthen recovery efforts. How will this work be viewed by the newly established Department?
- During the Senate hearings, there were a few direct questions on Substance Use Disorders(SUDs). There was little airtime as all the other issues across all the other larger Departments got their questions aired and addressed. There is

concern that similarly this will occur as the "voice" of drug and alcohol gets lost in a Department of over 18,000 people. How will this be prevented?

In closing, thank you for the opportunity to share our challenges as we try to intervene and assist those individuals most vulnerable in our communities and commonwealth. Based on the answers received from the prior questions and the discussions regarding the questions, it is not clear that we have enough information to know if the establishment of a unified Department of Health and Human Services is the right thing to do at this time. The suffering from the diseases of substance use disorder, mental illness, child abuse and neglect, and senior abuse and neglect must force us as concerned citizens to be sure before we concluded that a Unified Health and Human Services Department should be established.