

**Testimony of Secretary Brian M. Duke  
Pennsylvania Department of Aging  
Before the Senate Aging & Youth Committee  
September 7, 2011**

Good Morning Chairperson Ward and distinguished Members of the Senate Aging & Youth Committee. Thank you for the invitation to be with you today. It is good to make a return visit to Senator Vogel's district in Beaver County and to the Center at the Mall. My thanks to all with the Beaver County Office on Aging who not only serve as our partners in an important mission but also as the front door to the services we offer to fulfill the Pennsylvania Department of Aging and Office of Long Term Living's goal of "enhancing the quality of life of all older Pennsylvanians by empowering diverse communities, the family and the individual."

I am grateful to Governor Corbett for this opportunity to serve the Commonwealth as its Secretary of Aging. Governor Corbett is committed to older Pennsylvanians as evidenced by his protection of elders as Attorney General, in his principles he has prioritized throughout his campaign for Governor and in the first months of his administration through actions such as signing the PACE Moratorium legislation (HB 463, enacted as Act 21 of 2011) which protected valuable prescription drug benefits for 31,000 Pennsylvanians. Thank you to Senator Ward for your leadership in shepherding this legislation through the Senate.

My thanks is also extended to those with us today and those receiving services in our communities. We are indebted to you for your contributions which have made Beaver County the great county it is and for the lived experiences you share as we connect through service. It is great to visit a vibrant community like the one which meets here at the Center at the Mall. My thanks to those who work and volunteer here and to participants. Your vitality, interaction and sense of community make this a success.

As we look at Beaver County, we see over 22% of its population above the age of 62. This is 7% higher than the state's average. Pennsylvania ranks 5th in the nation of people age 60 and older and by the year 2020, 1 in 4 people you pass on the street will be over the age of 60. For all of us gathered here we are living in a time of challenge but also I believe a time of opportunity.

To define the challenge and opportunity it may be good to start with the 11-12 Budget. The FY 11-12 Budget was passed on time for the first time in 8 years. It is a reality-based budget built upon dollars available to be spent. There was a 4 percent decrease in spending overall with a budget totaling \$27.149 billion. And the wishes of Pennsylvanians were fulfilled in that there was no increase in taxes. There were reductions above what the Governor requested in Department of Public Welfare's budget and those will first be met by identifying and eliminating errors, waste and inefficiency. The programs and services in the Department of Aging supported by dollars from the Lottery Fund were basically flat funded. In conjunction with the Budget, Governor Corbett and the Legislature worked together to amend Act 1, which will provide older Pennsylvanians and other taxpayers with significant property tax reform.

The Pennsylvania Department of Aging remains grateful for the support received from the Pennsylvania Lottery. About 75% of our budget comes to us through the Lottery. And it is through these funds we provide community services, provide and coordinate long term care services and protect Pennsylvania's older citizens. This support here in Beaver County is reflected by \$3,217,000 provided to the Beaver

County AAA, \$5,612,007 provided to support PACE/PACENET participants, \$806,000 provided for Shared and Free Ride Services, \$5,201,000 in support of Property Tax and Rent Rebates.

We also need to reflect on other factors which I believe will influence the Commonwealth as it continues its commitment to older Pennsylvanians.

- 1) Stewardship – The stewardship we bear at the Pennsylvania Department of Aging and Office of Long Term Living is to make sure the resources provided are indeed used for the intended purpose to help those in greatest economic and social need. Because of the growth in the number of older Pennsylvanians and persons living with disabilities we find ourselves extending our stewardship to serve those who have not yet knocked on our doors. There are those who may be eligible for services but have not yet accessed services. We must move forward with partners in the Commonwealth to ensure that health and wellness are maintained.
- 2) Quality and Transparency - We seek to make sure the services provided are indeed quality services. Through a variety of mechanisms extending from licensure to benchmarking reports we seek to build on a foundation which assures us all that services provided first do no harm, second, meet the needs defined and third, enhance the quality of life of those we serve. We will seek to continue progress in monitoring quality.
- 3) Rebalancing Care – For several years we have discussed the care we provide through home and community based services and the care we provide through skilled nursing facilities. Pennsylvania is making progress to achieve a better balance between these two sectors of our continuum of care. But we also know our dialogue has focused on ‘this vs. that’ or ‘us vs. them’. In a time of finite resources and a growing demand we must indeed shift that dialogue to a focus on right care, with the right intensity, in the right setting. We do not when speaking of the need to rebalance care negate any one part of the valued continuum. Each part is necessary and makes Pennsylvania stronger in its ability to meet need. We do value all sectors and issue an invitation to come to the table and help us as we see beyond impassioned missions and commit to sharing professional expertise and lived experiences to create what is needed to move forward.
- 4) Finite Resources – PA’s citizens have tasked us with finding other ways to pursue excellence and make progress. The Pennsylvania Department of Aging and the Office of Long Term Living will work toward the creation or strengthening of public/private partnerships, encourage new ventures which not only meet service needs but support the economy, and serve as a catalyst for grassroots initiatives which can make a difference. We will enhance access to best practices which have taken root here in Pennsylvania and support replication where applicable. Indeed Pennsylvania has many talents, strengths and assets. We need to convene these assets so we can bring the best of Pennsylvania to Pennsylvanians.
- 5) Our Future – We are embarking on a strategic planning process which will define our direction moving forward. It helps reaffirm a mission, establish common ground and sets a map before us to follow. The first week of November we will kick off a process to create a 4-year plan which will guide Pennsylvania as it continues to serve older Pennsylvanians and people living with disabilities. We will engage Pennsylvania, its providers both within and outside of the long term care continuum, its aging network, its citizens, its academic institutions, and others. We state this fully cognizant that there is a working list of things to get fixed or things to get done. This

statement of our future does not negate the building blocks we need to get the job done. But if we only focus on these things, our future in the Commonwealth becomes ill defined and we will not be prepared for what needs to be done. As we look to the future, we must have a clear vision and strategic direction to guide our efforts. The Department of Aging will pursue a two-fold mission 1) Discover and pursue ways for older Pennsylvanians and persons with disabilities to age and live well; and equally important 2) discover and pursue ways to ensure our communities can become better places to age and live well.

Today the Senate Aging and Youth Committee will hear from the many valued parts of the long term care continuum. Each provider in this continuum from home and community based services to skilled nursing care provides a necessary service and we are grateful for their dedication and what they do. I fully intend to engage all of you, our partners and stakeholders, as we move forward. I am grateful for the partnership of the organizations in the room today and for those that couldn't be with us. We recognize that no one sector of society can achieve our goals in isolation.

Thank you for your time today and I welcome any questions or comments from the Committee now and in the future.