



**Senate Public Health & Welfare Committee
Confirmation Hearing for the Secretary of Public Welfare
Gary Alexander
May 11, 2011**

Good morning Chairwoman Vance, Chairwoman Kitchen, Vice-Chairman Mensch, members of the Senate Public Health and Welfare Committee and invited guests. My name is Gary Alexander and it is an honor to come before this committee and seek your approval to serve as the Secretary of the Department of Public Welfare for the Commonwealth.

I want to thank Governor Corbett for inviting me to be part of his team. I have learned a great deal over the past few months from visiting with you and others inside and outside state government to discuss a shared vision for what the department can and should be. Despite the good work many have done in the department over the years, there is a clear consensus that there is more work to be done, greater efficiencies to be achieved and greater cost savings to be made.

Before I was appointed in January to serve as Governor Corbett's public welfare secretary, I held a similar position in Rhode Island. There, I served as the Secretary of Health and Human Services. One of my primary goals in that job was to transform Rhode Island's health and human services system into a value-oriented, performance-driven system focused on the needs of the consumer, with a focus on independence and self-sufficiency whenever possible. I believe this experience has prepared me to lead the Department of Public Welfare here in PA and to make it --- efficient, organized and accountable.

When Governor Corbett asked me to come to Pennsylvania, he invited me to bring this government reform minded philosophy with me. With that in mind, we set out to do three things in our first few months on the job:

1. Top to bottom internal audit, review and inventory of all operations and programs. This process, which is still ongoing, will bear much fruit in the upcoming months and years to find common-sense but cost-effective ways to allow Pennsylvania to sustain a social-services system for those that truly need it. Also, a large part of this process has been to create management dashboards, a data driven management report for the secretary and senior management and develop health indicators to track progress. This will provide all policy decision makers with clear evidence to make sound decisions.

2. Reach out to the line staff to hear their concerns – those that work in the trenches each and every day. This process has provided us with the guts of the inner workings of the department. From this, we are learning much about how we apply rules, if we apply them at all. In fact, we have established a very good rapport with the SEIU and compliment them for assisting us with cost containment measures. They agree, we have been much to lax in following the rules and regulations to that would prevent abuse. We look forward to our relationship.
3. **Visit the consumers and facilities to touch the face and heart of the department.** This process provides us with the valuable knowledge of asking consumers and families what works and what doesn't or how much we may be over paying. It's amazing how much a family and consumer will tell you about their services.

As you know, DPW has been growing at about 12% year over year. This type of growth is unsustainable financially and morally. Our vision and goal will be provide cost effective services to track and improve behaviours, encourage employment, assist individuals to live independently and drive down expenditures. We must remember that the best anti-poverty measure is a JOB. We will do everything in our power to ensure that people are working including the disabled. They too deserve the chance at independence.

I recognize the challenges this job brings. The commonwealth's current budget deficit requires that the department manage its resources in an efficient and cost-effective manner. My focus is on accountability, stopping fraud, abuse and waste and reforming the Public Welfare system into a model that encourages and rewards self-sufficiency and independence rather than one that fosters long-term dependence. Though this year's budget presents challenges, I strongly believe it also presents opportunity. We all must remember that even if we had all the money in the world we would not want a system that encourages dependency and crowds out civil society and charity. That is exactly why we have a much more selfish society today and we have seen the breakdown of community and family.

As is the case in any healthy democracy, I know there will be some issues where we agree and somewhere we don't. But we all share the same commitment to helping Pennsylvanians. Over the past four months I have met some amazing Pennsylvanians and I am thankful for the warm welcome I have received. I value the opportunity to work with you to create a stronger, more efficient DPW.

I want to again thank you for this opportunity to appear before you today and ask for your endorsement to serve as the Secretary of the Department of Public Welfare for Pennsylvania. I will take any questions you might have at this time.