

3. Let's restore the \$11.5 million in funding cuts to counties for addiction treatment. Funding for treatment of drug and alcohol addiction through the Behavioral Services Initiative (BHSI) and Act 152 line items has been reduced by \$11.5 million since FY08-09, a 22% reduction. At the same time, the prescription drug and heroin problem in Pennsylvania has reached epidemic levels with hundreds of emergency room admissions, overdoses and overdose deaths reported from across the Commonwealth.
4. Let's enact an Emergency Addiction Treatment Fund for long-term treatment for people addicted to prescription and street opiates. The drug companies that manufacture and make billions on the sale of these drugs should be required to contribute to this fund. After all, their product has caused many unnecessary fatalities and is now driving the street opiate problem as well.
5. Let's aggressively enforce the federal Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act to ensure that people in need of alcohol and other drug addiction treatment are able to obtain help. This federal law was enacted in 2008 and is intended to ensure that drug and alcohol and mental health problems are treated in a non-discriminatory fashion in health insurance plans. Initial enforcement of the Act is a state responsibility.
6. Let's enact Medicaid Expansion for the 500,000 Pennsylvanians who have no health insurance and are not eligible for Medicaid have health care coverage. Some of the populations that will be able to obtain health care coverage through Medicaid Expansion are low-income wage earners employed in the food services, hospitality and landscaping industries including cooks, waiters, housekeeping staff and others. Medicaid Expansion will also provide health care coverage for 49% of Pennsylvania's uninsured veterans or about 23,000 individuals.

Continuing our progression toward the number 1 position in fatal drug poisonings in the country is simply unacceptable. The 2,000 Pennsylvanians we lost in 2011 include the student living next door, the mother addicted to opiates following knee surgery, senior citizens making mistakes with medication and others.

No family is immune. Any of our families could be next. Let's get the job done. This isn't rocket science.

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