

GOOD MORNING AND THANK YOU TO THE CENTER FOR RURAL PENNSYLVANIA BOARD,
CHAIRMAN SENATOR YAW AND CO-HOST DR. KAREN WHITNEY FOR BRING THIS FORUM TO
CLARION COUNTY.

MY NAME IS BONNIE SUMMERS AND I HAVE THE PLEASURE TO SERVE AS A COUNTY
COMMISSIONER OF VENANGO COUNTY AND PREVIOUSLY I HAD BEEN A DRUG AND ALCOHOL
PROFESSIONAL AS THE ADMINISTRATOR OF THE COUNTY DRUG AND ALCOHOL PROGRAM.
MY MAIN REASON FOR PROVIDING TESTIMONY TODAY IS THAT WE ARE FACING A DRUG
USE AND OVERDOSE CRISIS THROUGHOUT PENNSYLVANIA , IN RURAL COUNTIES SUCH AS
VENANGO COUNTY WHERE

IT IS DESTROYING OUR YOUTH AND FAMILIES AND KILLING THOSE IN ITS PATH.

FAMILIES ARE CRUMBLING. CHILDREN ARE WITHOUT PARENTS. OUR COUNTY HAD BEEN
OVERRUN BY DRUG DEALERS FROM DETROIT BRINGING IN THE HEROIN BEGINNING IN 2006.
THEY SAW VENANGO AS A RURAL COUNTY THAT WAS PRIME FOR DRUG DEALING AND THEY
BEGAN TO PEDDLE HEROIN. FINALLY AFTER A FEW YEARS,
LAW ENFORCEMENT WAS ABLE TO GET MANY OF THEM PUT AWAY, HOWEVER THEY LEFT A
PATH OF DESTRUCTION. MANY OF OUR YOUNG PEOPLE DIED, OR WERE INCARCERATED
AND MANY OF OUR FAMILIES WERE TORN APART. WHEN THE HEROIN STOPPED COMING IN,
THEN THE PRESCRIPTION MEDS SUCH AS OXYCODONE

BECAME THE DRUG AVAILABLE FOR USE. IN 2011, VENANGO COUNTY HAD 14 OVERDOSE
DEATHS. LAST YEAR A YOUNG MAN WAS FOUND DEAD IN HIS CAR FROM AN OVERDOSE OF
OXYCODONE. SITTING THERE FOR HOURS UNTIL SOMEONE BY CHANCE SAW HIM. THIS IS
ONLY ONE OF MANY CASES. WE'VE HAD TOO MANY OF OUR YOUNG PEOPLE DEAD FROM
HEROIN AND FROM PRESCRIPTION OPIATES. AND WE HAVE NOT STEPPED IN AND SAID
ENOUGH. THE HEROIN AND OPIATE ABUSE CONTINUES DAILY.

IN OUR CHILDREN AND YOUTH SERVICES PROGRAM, FOR BABIES AND CHILDREN AGES 0 TO
5, SUBSTANCE ABUSE IS THE MAIN REASON FOR OPENING CASES (93%). WHEN THE
BRAIN IS CRAVING HEROIN OR OPIATES, THERE IS NO REASONING LEFT TO
PROVIDE SUPPORT AND CARE FOR A BABY OR CHILD.

THE DAY'S ACTIVITIES REVOLVES AROUND MAKING SURE THAT CRAVINGS AND WITHDRAWAL WILL NOT HAPPEN. AND WHAT HAPPENS TO THAT BABY OR CHILD. THEY ARE LEFT WITH WHOEVER WILL CARE FOR THEM AND MANY TIMES THEY ARE ABUSED. I HAVE SEEN ENOUGH AND I AM HERE TODAY TO ASK THAT YOU WHO HAVE THE CHOICE TO MAKE A HUGE DIFFERENCE IN THE LIVES OF OUR BABIES, OUR YOUTH, OUR PARENTS, AND OUR FAMILIES.

I AM ASKING THAT YOU MAKE THAT CHOICE TO MAKE THAT DIFFERNCE.

IN VENANGO COUNTY, WE ARE A BLOCK GRANT COUNTY AND THIS HAS ALLOWED OUR HUMAN SERVICES TO INTEGRATE OUR DEPARTMENTS SUCH AS DRUG AND ALCOHOL, MENTAL HEALTH AND CHILDREN AND YOUTH.

LAST YEAR, OUR COUNTY WAS ABLE TO FUND DRUG AND ALCOHOL SERVICES THAT WERE NOT AVAILABLE PREVIOUSLY SUCH AS IN-HOME FAMILY BASED SERVICES, IN-HOME EARLY HEAD START, AND A RE-ENTRY PROGRAM

FROM JAIL. I'M SURE YOU ARE AWARE THAT ABOUT 80% OF THOSE INCARCERATED HAVE DRUG AND ALCOHOL ABUSE

PROBLEMS SO WE ARE FOCUSING ON PROVIDING TREATMENT IN THE JAIL AND THEN FOLLOWING THROUGH AT DURING RELEASE AND DURING TRANSITION TO THE COMMUNITY. WE VERY MUCH APPRECIATE THE FLEXIBILITY OF THE BLOCK GRANT. ONE OF THE THINGS THAT WILL HELP THOSE WHO NEED TREATMENT IS TO EXPAND THE BLOCK GRANT TO ALL COUNTIES IN PENNSYLVANIA THAT ARE REQUESTING IT. IT HAS MADE A TREMENDOUS DIFFERENCE THROUGHOUT OUR ENTIRE HUMAN SERVICES SYSTEM

FROM CHILDREN AND YOUTH TO AGING AND ALL THOSE IN BETWEEN.

I KNOW THAT YOU ARE WORKING ON MANY BILLS AND I APPLAUD YOU FOR THAT AS THESE ACTIONS ARE NEEDED.

HOWEVER, MY EXPERIENCE IS TELLS ME THAT UNTIL WE FUND THE LEVEL OF TREATMENT THAT IS NEEDED AND THE LENGTH OF TIME THAT IS NEEDED, WE ARE CONTINUING TO

ALLOW THE DESTRUCTION OF OUR YOUTH, AND OF OUR FAMILIES AND THE DEATHS FROM HEROIN AND OTHER OPIATE OVERDOSES TO CONTINUE.

THE HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE OF THE COUNTY COMMISSIONERS ASSOCIATION OF PENNSYLVANIA HAS SUBMITTED A RESOLUTION TO SUPPORT A TASK FORCE OF KEY STAKEHOLDERS TO DEVELOP A COMPREHENSIVE SOLUTION TO THE CRISIS OF OPIATE ABUSE AND OVERDOSE RELATED DEATHS, ALONG WITH AN IMMEDIATE EMERGENCY APPROPRIATION OF AT LEAST AN ADDITIONAL \$18 MILLION OF COMMONWEALTH FUND DEDICATED TO PROVIDING RESOURCES TO ADDRESS THE CRISIS AND RELATED EMERGENCY TREATMENT NEEDS OF COUNTY RESIDENTS IMPACTED BY THIS OPIATE INFLUX.

WE KNOW THAT TREATMENT WORKS, BUT WE CAN'T CONTINUE TO ASSESS A LEVEL OF CARE OF LONG-TERM TREATMENT AND THEN SEND A PERSON OFF TO A VERY SHORT STAY OF 14 DAYS. WE KNOW THAT PROVIDING JUST A LITTLE OF TREATMENT DOES NOT WORK AND CONTINUES THE STIGMA THAT PEOPLE JUST DON'T WANT TO BECOME DRUG-FREE. GIVE US IN THE COUNTIES ACROSS PENNSYLVANIA THE FUNDS TO PROVIDE THE RIGHT TYPE AND THE RIGHT AMOUNT OF TREATMENT BASED ON CLINICAL INTEGRITY. I ASK THIS OF YOU TO PROVIDE A CHANCE FOR A BETTER LIFE FOR THOSE WE SERVE. THANK YOU.