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Gov. Wolf Provides Update on State's Commitment to Protecting Vulnerable Pennsylvanians

Harrisburg, PA – Governor Tom Wolf today provided an update on the state's commitment to protecting vulnerable populations, first announced when he [signed an executive order in July](#). Following that announcement that included the creation of his Council on Reform, the council [delivered a list of recommendations to him on November 1](#). Since that time, the governor has reviewed the recommendations and they have been presented for public comment. That public comment period ends today.

"Before the ink was dry on my executive order, the council was meeting to discuss ways we can improve how to serve and protect vulnerable Pennsylvanians," said Gov. Wolf. "They worked diligently over three months and delivered recommendations to ensure every human being is treated like a human being. The council engaged stakeholders, legislators, the public, and state agencies. They also tapped into the expertise of advisory bodies who continue to work tirelessly on these issues."

The council's work resulted in multiple recommendations with two themes: empowering and supporting the workforce, and ensuring vulnerable populations have access to the services they deserve.

Fulfilling one component of the executive order, the administration established the Office of Advocacy and Reform, hiring executive director Dan Jurman, who started today, to spearhead that office's work to advance protections for all vulnerable populations. Next steps for the council involve reviewing public comments received. Brinda Penyak, Council member and co-chair of the Protection and Intervention Committee, gave an overview of the council's work.

"The council members worked diligently in a short time frame to develop this report, including a wide array of recommendations to address the protection of vulnerable populations in many circumstances," Penyak said. "The work of the council was enhanced by the broad diversity of experience and expertise of its members. There was unanimous agreement on nearly every concept included in the report to the governor."

Alongside the work of the council, state agencies have been taking steps to improve the ways we serve and protect vulnerable populations:

- The Department of Health will be waiving birth certificate costs for Pennsylvanians experiencing homelessness. A birth certificate is required to get an ID, which is required to receive certain services and engage in employment.
- The Department of Human Services developed a new timeline to check to see if a service provider is following through on a plan of correction and to issue any necessary licensure action to a provider who continues to be out of compliance. More than 4,000 providers participated in department-offered trainings to learn the new rules.
- The Department of Aging is working to host trainings on Older Adult Protective Services Mandatory Reporting.
- The Governor's Office of Performance through Excellence is planning an administration efficiency training for county child welfare agencies.
- The Department of Corrections continues to work to protect its vulnerable populations including aging and special need inmates.
- Multiple agencies are working on a procurement process for new software to allow agencies to work together to provide and manage services.

"I'd like to thank the employees who are working hard on implementing these changes and new programs," Gov. Wolf said. "I'd also like to thank the members of the public who have provided valuable feedback to the council's recommendations. Today is the last day for the public to submit comments, and I encourage anyone who hasn't done so yet to please submit their thoughts."

Read the Council on Reform's recommendations [here](#). Respond with comments to the report [here](#).

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