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Shapiro Administration Recognizes Trauma and Mental Health Awareness Month

Harrisburg, PA – Today, the Shapiro Administration encouraged Pennsylvanians to focus on their mental health as leaders from multiple agencies marked May as Trauma and Mental Health Awareness Month. Pennsylvania is focused on expanding access to trauma-informed and healing-centered approaches so we can better respond to the needs of Commonwealth residents who have had adverse childhood or other serious, traumatic experiences to prevent and heal trauma.

The Shapiro Administration is committed to prioritizing the mental health and wellness of all residents. In the 2023-24 budget, **Governor Josh Shapiro** secured \$100 million for student mental health services and \$20 million for county mental health support. The 2024-25 budget proposal matches those investments and takes it a step further by investing:

- \$100 million in mental health funding for K-12 schools, building upon one-time federal funds and ensuring schools have the continued resources to provide mental health services to students and staff;
- Increasing funding for community-based mental health services by an additional \$20 million this year and calling for additional funds in successive years, reaching an overall increase of \$60 million per year by 2025-26; and
- \$10 million for 988 crisis hotline operations to enhance Pennsylvania’s crisis intervention services, and
- \$5 million for establishing and maintaining walk-in mental health crisis stabilization centers.

Prolonged exposure to adversity, stress, and trauma - particularly in early childhood - can cause lasting harm and contribute to some of the most pressing social and health challenges.

“To truly protect and empower our children, we need to address the overwhelming trauma they and the adults who interact with them have experienced. Collaborative transformation is needed at every level of society – in policy, systems, communities, families, and individuals,” said **Dr. Maryann McEvoy, EdD, Child Advocate for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania**. “We hope that May 2024 is another step forward in cross-sector and cross-state collaboration to heal our Commonwealth.”

HEAL PA, the Commonwealth's statewide trauma coalition works as a multisectoral and multidisciplinary vehicle for trauma prevention and intervention in Pennsylvania. Together with partners from DHS' Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (OMHSAS), the PA Behavioral Health Council, and PDE's Office of Safe Schools, a series of events were organized and made available to the public at no cost. Activities included guided Yoga on the steps of the Capitol building by Y6 Yoga of Collegeville and Exton PA and an art exhibit entitled I'm Fine, initiated by co-curators Carrie Breschi and Maureen Joyce, that displayed images of ceramic masks made by residents throughout the Commonwealth to represent how we often minimize our mental health struggles.

"The Shapiro Administration recognized it is essential to address the needs of the behavioral healthcare landscape and created the Pennsylvania Behavioral Health Council. The Council's work will result in a roadmap to improve access, affordability, and quality of mental health and substance use care services," said **Dr. Christina Finello, Executive Director of the Pennsylvania Behavioral Health Council**. "This initiative aims to reduce the burden of mental health and substance use disorders on communities across Pennsylvania, resulting in better overall well-being for its residents. Ultimately, our behavioral health system of care will help our families, friends, and neighbors get help when they are in need."

"Our mental and physical health are equally important. If we do not address behavioral health challenges, we cannot show up for our families, our friends, and most importantly, ourselves," said **OMHSAS Deputy Secretary Jennifer Smith**. "That is why the Shapiro Administration, and the Department of Human Services, has made it a priority to ensure that all Pennsylvanians have equitable, affordable, and local access to behavioral health services. The Governor's proposed 2024-25 budget would invest \$20 million to county behavioral health systems to help them serve their communities. Building on last year's budget investment, we are well-positioned to provide much-needed funding to our neighbors and loved ones across Pennsylvania who need and deserve accessible, high quality behavioral health services."

Additionally, as part of the #WeHealUS campaign, Pennsylvania is coming together with every state in the U.S. for a unified, consistent, and impactful movement around trauma-informed services and mental health intervention.

For more information about HEAL PA, visit www.healpa.org and be sure to stay up to date with all HEAL PA news via Facebook or Instagram.