



## Pennsylvania Department of Human Services

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Shapiro Administration Calls for New Investments in Maternal Health and the Rural Health Care Workforce During Visit to Uniontown Hospital's New, Reopened Maternity Unit**



**Uniontown, PA** – Today, **Department of Human Services (DHS) Secretary Dr. Val Arkoosh** toured the newly-opened WVU Medicine Children's Birthing Center at Uniontown Hospital, which brings labor and delivery services back to Fayette County and the surrounding area. While there, Secretary Arkoosh highlighted **Governor Josh Shapiro's** common-sense, strategic investments in the 2025-26 proposed budget to expand maternal health services and alleviate ongoing workforce recruitment challenges facing many rural hospitals by continuing to invest in rural health systems.

"Everyone deserves access to high-quality, supportive, and accessible care before, during and following their birthing experience. Timely, comprehensive, and trusted pre- and postnatal care make a big difference in the overall health of both parents and newborns, but we know that when people do not have access to health care locally, it can be a significant barrier to healthy outcomes," said **Secretary Arkoosh**. "The reopening of Uniontown Hospital's birthing center is a shining example of progress being made in our rural communities to support growing families and ensure that no matter where people live in the Commonwealth, they benefit from a stable health care presence in their community. The Shapiro Administration is committed to being a partner as communities and health care providers work to improve access to high quality maternity care for all, including in our rural communities."

Since taking office, **Governor Shapiro** has prioritized addressing maternal health disparities. In the [2023-24 budget](#), the Governor worked to secure the first-ever investment in addressing maternal mortality with **\$2.3 million** to expand maternal health programming and for the implementation of prevention strategies to reduce maternal mortality and morbidity.

Governor Shapiro built on that success by securing an additional **\$2.6 million** in the [2024-25 budget](#) for maternal mortality prevention, managed through the Department of Health. The [Governor's 2025-2026 budget proposal](#) continues this multi-year investment by again proposing **\$5 million** to fund maternal health initiatives, including implementing universal postpartum depression screenings and improving referrals to care and resources for the roughly one in seven moms who experience depression during or within one year of their pregnancy.

The 2024-25 bipartisan budget also included **\$10 million in state funds, which allowed Pennsylvania to leverage further federal funding, to contribute nearly \$37 million** to support hospitals operating in rural communities.

In an effort to build on this support to Pennsylvania's rural health care providers, **Governor Shapiro's [2025-26 budget proposal](#)** makes common-sense, strategic investments including:

- **\$10 million** for rural hospitals to leverage an additional **\$25.1 million** in federal matching funds, bringing total support to **\$35.1 million**. This builds off work started with the 2024-25 budget that invested a total of \$36.7 million in state and federal funding to support hospitals in rural communities.
- An additional **\$10 million** to invest in health care facilities statewide, through the Department of Human Services, to assist the Commonwealth in responding to urgent consumer health needs and staffing requirements. This investment will also leverage an additional \$25.1 million in federal matching funds, bringing total support to \$35.1 million.
- **\$10 million** to expand behavioral health loan repayment programs, ensuring providers are available statewide – including in rural communities – to meet the growing demand for mental health care and address a critical workforce shortage.
- **\$5 million** to expand the Primary Care Loan Repayment Program offering loan repayment for health care providers that serve in rural communities.
- **\$20 million** in a new dedicated appropriation to health care facilities for patient safety and quality improvement initiatives that reduce barriers to care like affordability and transportation and improve reliable access to needed providers.
- **\$5 million** to educate, train, and recruit nursing professionals through tuition support, ensuring a steady pipeline of highly trained professionals.
- **Enhancing postpartum depression screening** and intervention efforts to ensure timely and equitable access to maternal and mental health care for mothers.
- **Encouraging legislation to grant full practice authority to nurse practitioners** who have worked under a physician for three years, increasing access to care in underserved communities.

WVU Medicine Uniontown Hospital is a 145-bed community hospital providing a full range of medical, surgical, and diagnostic services to patients in Fayette County, Pennsylvania, and the surrounding region. As part of the WVU Health System, Uniontown Hospital is committed to delivering high-quality, compassionate care close to home. For more information about WVU Medicine Uniontown Hospital, visit [WVUMedicine.org/Uniontown](https://WVUMedicine.org/Uniontown).

"It was an honor to welcome Secretary Arkoosh and members of the Department of Human Services to our hospital campus," **Carrie Willetts, president and CEO of Uniontown Hospital, said.** "The visit was an opportunity to both highlight the advancements we have made, with the

support of the WVU Health System, such as opening the new Birthing Center, and to discuss opportunities for continued progress and increased health outcomes for the community we serve.”

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