

Mark B. Cohen

State Representative • 202nd Legislative District
 127 Irvis Office Building
 P.O. Box 202202
 Harrisburg, PA 17120-2202



State Representative
MARK B. COHEN

202nd Legislative District

Human Services Update 2011



CAPITOL OFFICE:
 127 Irvis Office Building
 P.O. Box 202202
 Harrisburg, PA 17120-2202
 (717) 787-4117

CONSTITUENT SERVICE OFFICES:
 6001 North 5th St.
 Philadelphia, PA 19120
 (215) 924-0895
 Monday - Friday, 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

7601 Castor Ave., Room 200
 Glendale Office Center, Philadelphia, PA 19152
 (215) 342-2167 • (215) 342-2168
 Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, 9:30 a.m. to 4 p.m.

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State Representative MARK B. COHEN
 202nd Legislative District **Human Services Update 2011**

If you, or your friends and family, have concerns about the delivery of human services or any other concerns about state government, please contact one of my legislative offices.

As always, my staff and I will make every effort to assist you with any state issue or program.

Sincerely,

Mark B. Cohen

Olney Office:
 Fifth and Champlost Streets
 6001 N. Fifth St.
 (215) 924-0895 or (215) 924-3690.
 Monday through Friday,
 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Glendale Office Center:
 7601 Castor Ave. • Room 200
 (215) 342-2167
 Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday,
 9:30 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Dear Friends and Neighbors:

This year, I have been appointed the Democratic Chairman of the Human Services Committee in the Pennsylvania House of Representatives. This session, the Republican Majority split the old Health and Human Services committee in part to make it easier to pass cuts in services offered by the Department of Public Welfare and cuts in Public Health programs. In order to maintain continuity I also serve as the Democratic Chairman of the Health Committee's Subcommittee on Healthcare. I am striving to use these new positions to improve public health and availability of health care, and to oppose unwise cuts in human services.

This is the first of several newsletters largely focused on Human Services Committee-related issues. The Republican-passed state budget devastated many of Pennsylvania's human services and health care programs. I fought, and will continue to fight, these budget cuts and the attempts to dismantle the programs many people rely on in times of need like the recent economic downturn.

This newsletter will also briefly discuss how other budget cuts have affected Philadelphia residents, especially cuts in education.

You can assist the Human Services Committee in its oversight duties by contacting me if you have any concerns that may relate to the Committee's jurisdiction.



Rep. Cohen supports a budget blueprint offered by colleague Curtis Thomas of Philadelphia that would put children, families and communities first in line for spending priorities.

Human Services Committee Jurisdiction

The Human Services Committee has responsibilities for state drug and alcohol programs, mental health, intellectual disabilities, physical disabilities, disease prevention and services, long-term living (whether in long-term care facilities, or home-based services), Clean Indoor Air Act and related issues. The committee has legislative oversight over the Pennsylvania Department of Health, the Department of Public Welfare, Office of Long-term Living in the Department of Aging and the soon to be created Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs. Despite the split, the new committee has an impressive jurisdiction that touches on many important issues and state programs that affect people's lives.

For more information:

- PA Department of Public Welfare (DPW)** www.dpw.state.pa.us
 General Information..... 1-800-692-7462
- PA Department of Health** www.health.state.pa.us
 Helpline..... 1-877-PA-HEALTH
- Long-term Living in PA** www.ltlinpa.org
 Helpline..... 1-866-286-3636
- Philadelphia Drug Treatment Hotline (24 hour)** 1-888-545-2600

A more comprehensive list of contacts for Human Service resources provided by Federal, State and Local governmental agencies is available at www.pahouse.com/Cohen/humanservices.asp



New WIC Income Guidelines

WIC is a federally funded health and nutrition program for Women, Infants and Children. WIC helps families by providing checks for buying healthy supplemental foods that meet current federal Dietary Guidelines from WIC authorized stores. The WIC program also provides nutrition education, breastfeeding support, and help finding health care and other community services. Participants must meet income guidelines and be pregnant women, new mothers, infants, or children younger than five. WIC applicants must reside in Pennsylvania, have a medical or nutritional risk, and have a gross household income, which does not exceed 185% of the U.S. Poverty Income.

In Philadelphia, the WIC agency is North Inc. (*North Central Organized Regionally for Total Health*)

MAIN WIC OFFICE & MOBILE WIC UNIT
 642 North Broad Street, Suite 101 • Philadelphia, PA 19130
 Phone: (215) 978-6100 or 1-800 743-3300
www.northwic.org

LOCAL WIC OFFICES AND CLINICS

- Olney-Logan Clinic** • 5751 North Broad Street, Philadelphia.....(215) 927-1950
- Northeast Clinic** • 8570 Bustleton Avenue, Philadelphia(215) 745-7251

Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Income Guidelines

Effective Date: July 1, 2011 (Gross Income)

Family Size	Monthly (Approx.)	Annually
1	\$1,678	\$20,147
2	\$2,267	\$27,214
3	\$2,856	\$34,281
4	\$3,445	\$41,348
5	\$4,034	\$48,415
6	\$4,623	\$55,482
7	\$5,212	\$62,549
8	\$5,801	\$69,616
<i>for each additional family member, add</i>		
	\$588	\$7,067

To apply for WIC, call the main WIC office or local clinic. WIC does not have an online application. The mobile WIC unit provides services to schools and shelters.



During a House Democratic Policy Hearing, Rep. Cohen addresses the impact that budget cuts will have on human services programs.

Committee Chairmen Join Mark Cohen in Letter Protesting Elimination of DPW Return-to-Work Programs

"The proposed changes to the welfare-to-work program, like the elimination of adult education and GED funding through the Move Up program ... will deny these individuals the help that they so desperately need and leave them stranded without the necessary skills to find employment before they reach their time-limited eligibility for benefits.

... We strongly urge you to reconsider these proposed changes to Pennsylvania's welfare-to-work program in order to ensure that our state's most vulnerable citizens are given the chance to find work and lift their families out of poverty."

Letter to DPW Secretary Gary Alexander with copy to Governor Tom Corbett, June 23, 2011

*Signed by
Rep. Mark Cohen and six other Democratic
Committee Chairmen*

Cohen Opposes PA Budget Cuts to Health and Human Services

The Republican budget cuts Department of Public Welfare spending by \$652 million for 2011-12. Few areas are unaffected. Deep cuts are envisioned in Medicaid and other programs (see below).

The budget cuts hospital payments for obstetric and neonatal services, burn centers, critical access hospitals, trauma centers and uncompensated care. Other "reforms" cut services for people with disabilities by \$17.2 million in state funding and the attendant care line item by \$13.6 million in state funds.

Additionally, the Republican spending plan cuts millions of dollars from county services and programs – where state funding is reduced, counties must either replace with local revenue or cut services. This includes cuts to county child welfare, mental health, behavioral health, homeless assistance and the human services development fund.

Pennsylvania already ranks at the bottom of states for public health professionals per population. This budget cuts public health funding even further with drastic cuts in health screening, education and treatment in dozens of program areas.

Legislation Gives Unprecedented Power to Corbett Administration to Cut Human Services and Health Care Without Legislative or Regulatory Approval

A last-minute budget amendment allowed the Corbett Administration to dramatically cut Department of Public Welfare health care payments and other benefits without any legislative approval or any opportunity for public comment that is provided by law in the regulatory review process. The legislation was supported by Governor Corbett and his appointees in the Department of Public Welfare (DPW), and Republican majorities in the legislature; it was strongly opposed by me and other Democrats.

It allows the Governor and DPW to:

- Reduce cash assistance grant amounts (which are already at around 25% of the federal poverty level and have not been increased since 1990);
- Increase copayments for visits to medical providers without limit;
- Reduce covered medical services under the Medicaid program without limit;
- Eliminate whole categories of eligibility for Medicaid, adding thousands to the uninsured;
- Eliminate support for services that help low-income families move from welfare to work;
- Increase copayments for child care subsidies to unaffordable levels;
- Impose costly and unnecessary new drug testing requirements for food stamp and cash assistance recipients who have had a felony drug conviction within the past five years.

We will be monitoring how DPW uses this unprecedented power; but the new law gives legislators and the public few options to comment and no ability to stop any service cuts.

**See Mark Cohen's debate on HB 960 at
www.pahouse.com/Cohen**

Education Budget: Deep Cuts at All Levels

- **Philadelphia School District:** a cut of 21.6% totaling more than \$272 million lost to the district. This equals a devastating cut of over \$1300 per student! Philadelphia took a disproportionately high share of the state's cuts to K-12 education: Relatively more wealthy school districts fared much better in the Republican budget.
- **Community College of Philadelphia:** 10% cut totaling \$23.5 million for all community colleges statewide.
- **Temple University:** 19% cut equaling \$32.8 million in addition to the cuts to Temple University Hospital.
- **Lincoln University:** 19% cut equaling \$2.6 million.
- **West Chester University, Cheyney University and other State System of Higher Education (SSHE) universities that serve Philadelphia students and offer the most affordable four-year, college education in Pennsylvania:** 18% cut totaling \$90.6 million statewide.

I joined with other Democrats to block the cut to Temple funding in hopes that we could use part of the growing revenue surplus to restore funding to Temple and other state-related universities, Pitt, Penn State and Lincoln. Only after the Senate Republican Appropriations Chairman -- who incidentally represents State College, Pennsylvania, the home of Penn State -- Governor Corbett and the House Republicans insisted on their cuts did we reluctantly relent to pass the Temple University budget at the Republican funding level -- a 19% cut. Without the opportunity to restore the cuts, Democrats were forced to support some level of funding for these universities. We will work to undo some of the damage in the next budget cycle. An affordable college education must be available to all citizens.

**See Mark Cohen's debate on Temple University funding at
www.pahouse.com/Cohen.**

A 'Shared Sacrifice' Budget?

Despite the Republican rhetoric, this is a budget that "shares" massive cuts between programs designed to help the destitute, elderly, unemployed, disabled, and medically in need. All the while, more state dollars are "shared" with corporations with new tax cuts and deductions. The biggest beneficiary of this budget is the oil and gas industry which gets to develop and extract natural gas from Pennsylvania's vast Marcellus Shale gas deposits without the extraction tax common in all states that have natural gas resources, nor meaningful environmental protections. Taxpayers pick up the natural gas development tab for damage to roads, the environment and increased government costs. Taxpayers will see local tax increases to help make up for state budget cuts to school districts.

PA Budget Hurts Philadelphia Hospitals and the People Who Need Them

Temple University Hospital, the hospital treating the highest number of uninsured patients in the state, received an estimated 28% cut in state reimbursements and funding. Albert Einstein Medical Center and other area hospitals that serve the uninsured and Medicaid and Medicare patients will lose millions of dollars in funding. We cannot expect the same level of health care service -- let alone expect improvements -- if government continues to cut eligibility for health care benefits like Medicaid leaving more people uninsured AND continues to cut reimbursements to hospitals and other providers. We need a major policy shift in favor of affordable and accessible health care for all citizens.



Rep. Cohen listens to Gov. Corbett's first state budget address.

'Dean of the House'

With the retirement of Rep. Frank Oliver of Philadelphia and with the death of State Senator Michael O'Pake of Reading in 2010, I became the longest-serving elected member of the Pennsylvania House of Representatives or Senate -- unofficially referred to by tradition as the "Dean of the House." I will continue to use all my expertise of 37 years as an elected Representative in Pennsylvania -- including my 7 years as Chairman of the House Labor Relations Committee, 21 years as an elected Democratic leader and my current appointment as Democratic Chairman of the Human Services Committee -- to support policies and programs that benefit the broad majorities of Pennsylvania's working families.

Cohen Debate Remarks on a Very Bad Budget

See Mark Cohen's budget debate at www.pahouse.com/Cohen

"This is a pass-the-buck budget. It will lead to higher property taxes, higher wage taxes and higher business taxes from local governments in all areas of the state. Political courage does not consist in forcing others to make the tough decisions.

We don't have enough money today to solve all of the long-term financial problems of Pennsylvania over the next generation. But we do have enough money to restore every penny -- every penny -- of cuts in education and the Department of Labor and Industry and other worthy line items without raising a penny in taxes."