

COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE  
BUDGET HEARING

STATE CAPITOL  
HARRISBURG, PA  
MAIN CAPITOL BUILDING  
140 MAJORITY CAUCUS ROOM

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 26, 2020

PENNSYLVANIA EMERGENCY  
MANAGEMENT AGENCY  
&  
STATE FIRE COMMISSION

BEFORE:

HONORABLE STANLEY SAYLOR, MAJORITY CHAIRMAN  
HONORABLE MATT BRADFORD, MINORITY CHAIRMAN  
HONORABLE ROSEMARY BROWN  
HONORABLE SHERYL M. DELOZIER  
HONORABLE GEORGE DUNBAR  
HONORABLE JONATHAN FRITZ  
HONORABLE MATT GABLER  
HONORABLE KEITH J. GREINER  
HONORABLE SETH GROVE  
HONORABLE MARCIA M. HAHN  
HONORABLE DOYLE HEFFLEY  
HONORABLE LEE JAMES  
HONORABLE JOHN LAWRENCE  
HONORABLE JASON ORTITAY  
HONORABLE CLINT OWLETT  
HONORABLE GREG ROTHMAN  
HONORABLE JAMES STRUZZI  
HONORABLE JESSE TOPPER  
HONORABLE JEFF WHEELAND  
HONORABLE RYAN WARNER  
HONORABLE MARTINA WHITE  
HONORABLE DONNA BULLOCK  
HONORABLE MORGAN CEPHAS  
HONORABLE CAROLYN COMMITTA  
HONORABLE AUSTIN DAVIS

*Pennsylvania House of Representatives  
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania*

1 (Continued)

2 HONORABLE MARIA DONATUCCI  
3 HONORABLE ELIZABETH FIEDLER  
4 HONORABLE MARTY FLYNN  
5 HONORABLE EDWARD GAINNEY  
6 HONORABLE PATTY KIM  
7 HONORABLE STEPHEN KINSEY  
8 HONORABLE LEANNE KRUEGER  
9 HONORABLE STEPHEN MCCARTER  
10 HONORABLE BENJAMIN SANCHEZ  
11 HONORABLE PETER SCHWEYER

7

8 NON-COMMITTEE MEMBERS

8

9 HONORABLE MIKE PEIFER  
10 HONORABLE MARK KELLER  
11 HONORABLE DAN MOUL  
12 HONORABLE SUE HELM  
13 HONORABLE MARCI MUSTELLA  
14 HONORABLE DAVE MILLARD  
15 HONORABLE RUSS DIAMOND  
16 HONORABLE MARTY CAUSER  
17 HONORABLE MARK GILLEN  
18 HONORABLE DAVE ZIMMERMAN  
19 HONORABLE STEPHANIE BOROWICZ  
20 HONORABLE MIKE DRISCOLL  
21 HONORABLE MALCOLM KENYATTA  
22 HONORABLE JOE CIRESI  
23 HONORABLE MARY ISAACSON  
24 HONORABLE EDDIE DAY PASHINSKI  
25 HONORABLE DANILO BURGOS  
HONORABLE CHRISTINA SAPPEY

18 COMMITTEE STAFF PRESENT:

19

DAVID DONLEY  
MAJORITY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
RITCHIE LAFEVER  
MAJORITY DEPUTY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

21

22 ANN BALOGA  
MINORIT EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
23 TARA TREES  
CHIEF COUNSEL

24

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I N D E X

TESTIFIERS

\* \* \*

JEFF BOYLE,  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR,  
9-1-1.....4

BRUCE TREGO,  
STATE FIRE COMMISSIONER,  
STATE FIRE COMMISSION.....7

DAVID R. PADFIELD,  
DIRECTOR,  
PEMA.....8

JEFF THOMAS,  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR,  
PEMA.....15

SUBMITTED WRITTEN TESTIMONY

\* \* \*

(See submitted written testimony and handouts  
online.)

## P R O C E E D I N G S

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3 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: If all of you  
4 would rise and raise your right hand.

5 (Testifiers sworn en masse.)

6 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: We'll start  
7 off our hearing with Representative Struzzi.

8 REPRESENTATIVE STRUZZI: Good afternoon,  
9 gentlemen. Thank you for being here. I want to  
10 get right into some issues related to 911. Act  
11 12 of 2015 updated the program and fee for  
12 Pennsylvania's 911 Law, which was reauthorized  
13 recently with the passage of Act 17 of 2019.

14 Related to the revenue that's generated  
15 for that, how much revenue has been generated and  
16 how is that then distributed to the counties?

17 DEPUTY DIRECTOR BOYLE: Sure. So average  
18 surcharge collections have been \$316 million --

19 REPRESENTATIVE STRUZZI: Okay.

20 DEPUTY DIRECTOR BOYLE: -- under our  
21 current legislation. That's a vast improvement  
22 from 2014, prior to Act 12, where revenue was  
23 \$190 million.

24 REPRESENTATIVE STRUZZI: Okay.

25 DEPUTY DIRECTOR BOYLE: And the surcharge

1 is currently distributed so 83 percent goes out  
2 to the counties through formula-based  
3 distributions. It's essentially a block grant to  
4 the counties.

5 REPRESENTATIVE STRUZZI: Okay.

6 DEPUTY DIRECTOR BOYLE: Fifteen percent  
7 is dedicated to Next Generation 911 and then two  
8 percent is for PEMA administrative costs.

9 REPRESENTATIVE STRUZZI: So the Next  
10 Generation 911, is that the wireless service or  
11 the full -- what is that?

12 DEPUTY DIRECTOR BOYLE: No, I'm sorry.  
13 So that is a complete upgrade of the  
14 infrastructure for our calls and data through a  
15 provider to our 911 centers. That current  
16 construction is decades old.

17 REPRESENTATIVE STRUZZI: Okay.

18 DEPUTY DIRECTOR BOYLE: It's nearing the  
19 end of its useful life and becoming increasingly  
20 difficult to maintain. So essentially, we're  
21 upgrading that infrastructure from a legacy  
22 environment to an IP-based or a digital  
23 environment.

24 REPRESENTATIVE STRUZZI: Okay. My  
25 question -- and I think this is a very serious

1 concern for PEMA, as it is for our emergency  
2 management folks back in Indiana County, which is  
3 the area that I represent, the 62nd District.

4 We recently -- excuse me. It's been a  
5 long day. We recently allocated some county  
6 funding to provide cell service in one of our  
7 county parks. Indian County, we go from urban to  
8 rural very fast and you can lose your cell signal  
9 just like that. And to me, that is a fundamental  
10 emergency management issue when you can't even  
11 make a 911 call from 10 miles outside of Indiana.

12 So can some of this funding be used for  
13 that? And if not, what is the plan to address  
14 those blackout zones?

15 DEPUTY DIRECTOR BOYLE: So that's really  
16 a wireless provider issue. So that's separate  
17 from 911.

18 REPRESENTATIVE STRUZZI: Okay.

19 DEPUTY DIRECTOR BOYLE: That's really the  
20 service providers for wireless service expanding  
21 their coverage, which is outside of our program.

22 REPRESENTATIVE STRUZZI: Right. I  
23 understand that, but it's still, to me, a public  
24 safety issue.

25 DEPUTY DIRECTOR BOYLE: I agree.

1           REPRESENTATIVE STRUZZI: Okay. And then,  
2 my next question is for the State Fire  
3 Commissioner. Again, I appreciate you all being  
4 here.

5           Related to emergency services,  
6 specifically ambulance service, I think we're in  
7 a critical situation right now with funding for  
8 our ambulance providers, Citizens Ambulance in  
9 particular in Indiana County. They're struggling  
10 to make ends meet. We see ambulance providers  
11 closing in other areas of at least western  
12 Pennsylvania, and then we have this issue with  
13 surprise billing and the impacts that that would  
14 have on our ambulance providers and emergency  
15 services.

16           Can you comment on that? What's your  
17 view? Is there a solution to this crisis?

18           FIRE COMMISSIONER TREGO: Really, the EMS  
19 side does not fall under me, so I really can't  
20 comment on exactly what that would be. That  
21 would be the Department of Health, Bureau of EMS.

22           REPRESENTATIVE STRUZZI: Okay.

23           FIRE COMMISSIONER TREGO: I'm sorry, sir.  
24 I don't have much knowledge on it at all.

25           REPRESENTATIVE STRUZZI: Again, though,

1 this gets to emergency management providing  
2 essential services to the citizens of this  
3 Commonwealth. So can anyone comment on this  
4 situation with the emergency or ambulance  
5 services?

6 DIRECTOR PADFIELD: Sure. I can kind of  
7 handle that. I do have an EMS background and  
8 obviously, Bureau of EMS is in our Agency. So  
9 that is a concern. I actually attended a  
10 Northwest County Commissioners Association  
11 meeting where this came up, and obviously, in the  
12 rural counties, it's a significant concern. I  
13 know that CCAP actually did a study and took a  
14 look at things. And there's actually a pick list  
15 of a number of different recommendations that  
16 potentially counties can implement or take a look  
17 at implementing.

18 REPRESENTATIVE STRUZZI: Okay.

19 DIRECTOR PADFIELD: Ultimately, it is  
20 going to be under the guidelines of the Bureau of  
21 EMS and under the Department of Health because  
22 they have the statutory or legal authority to be  
23 able to take a look at the things that can be  
24 done at the State level. But I agree, it is a  
25 concern. We've heard that concern when,



1 obviously, we're out doing things. And it's  
2 something that, you know, it affects the kind of  
3 broader market of emergency management.

4 REPRESENTATIVE STRUZZI: Okay. And then  
5 just one more for the State Fire Commissioner.  
6 Just a comment, perhaps, but I have one of the  
7 bills that were presented as part of the SR 6  
8 package. Any support we continue to give to our  
9 volunteer fire companies is greatly needed. I  
10 work very closely with a lot of them. You know,  
11 they struggle to find volunteers.

12 I know you're probably well aware of  
13 these issues. Training, particularly from an  
14 administrative standpoint, and just I want to  
15 continue to wave the flag for those men and women  
16 who volunteer to keep our communities safe. And  
17 anything we can do to help them is greatly  
18 appreciated. So thank you, gentlemen.

19 FIRE COMMISSIONER TREGO: Thank you.  
20 Appreciate your help.

21 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: Representative  
22 McCarter.

23 REPRESENTATIVE MCCARTER: Thank you very  
24 much, Mr. Chairman.

25 And again, I want to echo the sentiments

1 just said by my colleague about the great work  
2 that you have done in the past in preparing for  
3 many, so many emergencies in Pennsylvania, and  
4 along with all of the volunteers and all of the  
5 personnel that go into dealing with such  
6 emergencies across the State, whether they be  
7 flooding, whether they be natural disasters,  
8 fires, et cetera, et cetera. So again, thank you  
9 for all of that.

10 My question really today goes to, again,  
11 another one of those situations that you can't  
12 always see coming, and that's in the case now of  
13 the warning that the CDC or the Center for  
14 Disease Control gave yesterday, that we need to  
15 start planning seriously -- businesses and  
16 families across, not only the Commonwealth, but  
17 in the entire country, to deal with what they  
18 call an inevitable situation, an epidemic going  
19 across the United States for the coronavirus  
20 that's coming.

21 So what steps can you tell us that PEMA  
22 has taken to prepare the Commonwealth for this  
23 outbreak? We're seeing so much already in Italy  
24 and Iran and South Korea, Japan, and other  
25 countries around the world that have now seen

1 that flow from China.

2 DIRECTOR PADFIELD: Sure. I can address  
3 that. So obviously, there is a concern.  
4 Obviously, the information is coming out of the  
5 CDC and Health & Human Services at the Federal  
6 level. And especially last week, they actually  
7 brokered a call with the Governors and also  
8 Homeland Security advisors to talk about really  
9 the change in their strategy from a containment  
10 strategy to more of a mitigation strategy.

11 So from our Agency's perspective, we work  
12 very closely with the Department of Health. The  
13 Department of Health's Departmental Operations  
14 Center had been stood up in response to this. So  
15 it is actually in our building. So we're working  
16 with them, really, daily. And really what we're  
17 doing right now -- in fact, today there were a  
18 lot of e-mails back and forth. We've actually  
19 been updating our emergency management  
20 coordinators.

21 So we really work through our emergency  
22 management coordinators in the counties. We've  
23 already issued through our 911 office actually  
24 guidance to the 911 systems and the 911 directors  
25 regarding call taking and taking a look at travel

1 history, if they can gain that information. So  
2 we've done a number of -- or have taken a number  
3 of steps thus far. And we continue to push  
4 information out. We're now to the point right  
5 now with the Department of Health that we're  
6 going to start dedicated planning and start  
7 taking a look at -- we've had pandemic plans for  
8 years. This is a little different than the  
9 normal pandemic plan. So we're going to actually  
10 take a look at any changes that we need to  
11 actually make to those pandemic plans. And then,  
12 we're going to continue to push out guidance.

13 From a State agency perspective, we're  
14 going to continue to work with the Office of  
15 Administration and actually the Department of  
16 Health to be able to take a look from a State  
17 agency perspective to make sure that we're  
18 prepared, as well, and to really take a look at  
19 hosting a workshop to be able to take a look at  
20 the plans that are already in place and see if  
21 they need to be modified at all.

22 REPRESENTATIVE MCCARTER: Are there  
23 things that, from the past, and I think other  
24 pandemic training exercises and so forth from the  
25 past, as I recall back in 2009-'10, somewhere

1 back in then, that extensive plans were developed  
2 to help to make sure that people would be able to  
3 get basic necessities and food if, in fact,  
4 quarantining took place. I assume that's in fact  
5 the case now?

6 DIRECTOR PADFIELD: That is the case.  
7 And actually, we've taken a look at some of that  
8 because of the uniqueness of the voluntary  
9 quarantine and the folks that have come back into  
10 the State. We actually have a very good  
11 relationship through our public private  
12 integration component in the PEMA headquarters  
13 and we actually had some interesting requests for  
14 information on taking a look at folks that were  
15 already voluntarily quarantined. Is there a way  
16 to be able to get food delivery at home so they  
17 don't have to go out in the population? So we're  
18 taking a look at those things. And they're  
19 probably things that didn't exist back when the  
20 original pandemic plan occurred.

21 So that's one of the reasons we're taking  
22 a look at it and we're going to work across State  
23 agencies, predominantly with us and the  
24 Department of Health, to be able to take a look  
25 at that and really dust those plans off and

1 update those and really fine tune those for  
2 COVID-19.

3 REPRESENTATIVE MCCARTER: And can you  
4 comment also on the -- address the lines of  
5 authority and decisionmaking that would take  
6 place in an event such as this? Who makes those  
7 decisions, for instance, of closing the  
8 businesses or closing of schools and other things  
9 that may have to take place in such an event?

10 DIRECTOR PADFIELD: So that was one of,  
11 actually, the charges last week from the HHS and  
12 CDC and DHS, is really take a look at the lines  
13 of authority within the State and who really has  
14 the ability to be able to stop large venues and  
15 things like that and large gatherings, those  
16 types of things. So obviously, working with the  
17 Department of Education, taking a look at other  
18 State agencies that really have that legal  
19 authority is going to be key.

20 And obviously, with a Commonwealth, some  
21 of those things are going to reside at the local  
22 level and really making sure that we provide that  
23 guidance down to the counties and the  
24 municipalities to be able to really make good  
25 sound decisions. And a lot of this, you know,

1 deals with social distancing, obviously, so it's  
2 really taking a look at those parameters and  
3 really providing sound guidance associated with  
4 that.

5 REPRESENTATIVE MCCARTER: That all would  
6 be really useful for everybody to know. Thank  
7 you so much.

8 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

9 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: Representative  
10 James.

11 REPRESENTATIVE JAMES: Thank you,  
12 Mr. Chairman.

13 Over to your right, here, gentlemen.  
14 Welcome, panel. Thank you for your time and  
15 expertise today.

16 I want to talk a little bit about the  
17 Price Gouging Act of 2006, I believe it is. And  
18 as a panel of experts in your field, I think  
19 you're probably the right guys to ask.

20 Can you explain how the Price Gouging Act  
21 works in relation to declared states of disaster  
22 or states of emergency, please?

23 DIRECTOR PADFIELD: Do you want to take  
24 that one?

25 DEPUTY DIRECTOR THOMAS: Sure.

1           REPRESENTATIVE JAMES:  Somebody.

2           DEPUTY DIRECTOR THOMAS:  So I can answer,  
3   I think, most of it.  The basic principles are  
4   that in the time of a disaster -- and I think we  
5   all know this -- they were put into place  
6   originally because we didn't want folks to be  
7   hoarding materials and then charging outrageous  
8   prices for them.  I will tell you that I've been  
9   doing this for quite a while.  I can't think of  
10  any time when it has actually had to be -- anyone  
11  was ever charged with that because I think most  
12  folks in this Commonwealth are doing the right  
13  thing all of the time, including all of our  
14  business partners that we have.

15                 So I cannot give you an exact answer of  
16  the percentage.  I believe it is no more than 20  
17  percent of what it was over the previous 36  
18  months, the average price, but I can -- and  
19  again, that's off the top of my head.  I will get  
20  the exact numbers out of the Act to make sure  
21  that you get them.  But I think it's important to  
22  realize that it's in place for a reason.  It had  
23  a lot to do with when gas prices went really  
24  high.

25                 But to my knowledge -- and again, I've



1       been doing this a while, I don't know that we've  
2       ever charged anybody because I think in the  
3       Commonwealth we have very good business partners  
4       that understand that when we have a disaster,  
5       it's everyone's disaster.

6                REPRESENTATIVE JAMES:  So the fact that  
7       the law is out there has served to protect the  
8       public then?

9                DEPUTY DIRECTOR THOMAS:  I believe it  
10       has.

11               REPRESENTATIVE JAMES:  Yeah, it sounds  
12       like it.

13               As you know, back in January of 2018, the  
14       Governor declared a state of disaster emergency  
15       to address the opioid crisis here in  
16       Pennsylvania.  Has that declaration triggered the  
17       Price Gouging Act to your knowledge?

18               DIRECTOR PADFIELD:  I believe that is  
19       part of the -- and I may have to research this --  
20       I believe that is part of it, but again it goes  
21       back to what Director Thomas talked about, that  
22       really it hasn't been enforced or really hasn't  
23       been taken a look at.  Because really, if you  
24       take a look at the opioid disaster declaration  
25       and really the intent behind that, that is really

1 a mechanism to use -- and again, it's kind of a  
2 -- I call it an atypical disaster. It's still a  
3 disaster if 5,000 or greater than 5,000 people,  
4 obviously, die in the Commonwealth in any given  
5 year. That would be considered a disaster, but  
6 it's really that atypical disaster.

7 So really, I think the provisions -- and  
8 I really can't comment exactly, you know, how it  
9 came to be, but ultimately, most of what we deal  
10 with are natural disasters. And it's really --  
11 that provision is in there to really protect the  
12 consumers post-disaster.

13 REPRESENTATIVE JAMES: Well, so long as  
14 merchants go along with the program and don't  
15 attempt to actually price gouge in a state of  
16 emergency, we're good. However, two years ago,  
17 we passed SB 1172. These are all protections,  
18 consumer-related protections, against the Price  
19 Gouging Act, and it prevented unnecessary  
20 activation of this Act. The organization was  
21 opposed -- well, actually, no one opposed the  
22 legislation whatsoever. And even the Attorney  
23 General was, and as far as I know still is, in  
24 favor of it.

25 what would you tell the Governor today if

1 we pursue a new bill designed to add these  
2 protections for the consumer? would you advise  
3 him not to veto it?

4 He doesn't have to listen to your advice,  
5 but what would you advise him to do?

6 DIRECTOR PADFIELD: I think I would have  
7 to gain a little bit more understanding on it  
8 before I could probably render a decision on  
9 that. But I think that the key really is taking  
10 a look at the consumer protections. And if the  
11 consumer protections are there, then obviously,  
12 you know, as long as it meets the original  
13 intent, I think that is key, but I'd have to take  
14 a look at better -- obviously, the bill you  
15 talked about, I'd have to take a better look at  
16 that to be able to render a good informed  
17 decision.

18 REPRESENTATIVE JAMES: Okay. Well, I'm  
19 thinking you may have an opportunity to make a  
20 decision on that somewhere down the road, but I'm  
21 not going to predict when. Okay. Thank you very  
22 much.

23 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

24 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: Representative  
25 Krueger.

1           REPRESENTATIVE KRUEGER: Thank you,  
2 Mr. Chairman.

3           Thank you, gentlemen, so much for joining  
4 us here today. In preparation for this hearing,  
5 I spoke to our Delaware County Emergency Services  
6 Director and asked him what was a priority for  
7 emergency responders in the county as we came  
8 into this hearing. And one of the things that he  
9 highlighted for me was the need for funding and  
10 support for the county hazardous material teams.  
11 Every county, I understand, is required to have a  
12 certified team. In Delaware County, we have a  
13 new pipeline project, the Mariner East II. We've  
14 got older pipelines. We have refineries. We've  
15 had construction accidents in construction of the  
16 pipeline. We've had sinkholes. We've had gas  
17 leaks, and there's a very high demand on  
18 emergency services right now. And so as I was  
19 looking through the budget summary, I saw the  
20 line item for hazardous material and planning was  
21 only \$1.5 million for the entire Commonwealth.  
22 Do you -- yep, \$1.5 million.

23           In a \$35-\$36 billion budget, are we doing  
24 enough to support hazardous material response and  
25 cleanup in Pennsylvania, especially as we

1 continue to build new pipelines across the  
2 Commonwealth?

3 DIRECTOR PADFIELD: That's a very good  
4 question. So the Hazardous Materials Emergency  
5 Planning Fund, there's a couple of different  
6 funds. So we have the Hazardous Materials  
7 Response Fund, and that is actually predicated on  
8 fees that are paid by SERA Title 3 facilities  
9 that have chemicals above their threshold report  
10 quantity. So that is used predominantly,  
11 obviously, as part of money to be able to support  
12 hazardous materials response teams and things  
13 like that. There is a Federal grant out there,  
14 which is the Hazardous Materials Emergency  
15 Planning Fund, and that emergency planning fund  
16 is used to be able to support a number of  
17 activities associated with planning and training.  
18 And a lot of those funds can be used out of that  
19 allotment to be able to put towards pipelines in  
20 pipeline training, emergency response team  
21 training and training for hazardous materials  
22 teams. So that requires -- the HMEP requires a  
23 20-percent match.

24 So while the number may look small, not  
25 everyone has the same risk. We can probably take

1 a look at -- you probably have the PEMA by the  
2 numbers and it will tell you exactly what  
3 Delaware County actually received from the HMEP  
4 Grant Fund. And don't hold me to it, but I kind  
5 of looked at this before we came in and -- if you  
6 give us a second, we can actually pull that.

7 REPRESENTATIVE KRUEGER: I'd be very  
8 curious to know --

9 DIRECTOR PADFIELD: Yeah, we can pull  
10 that number up for you, obviously. But  
11 obviously, there are certain risks and more risks  
12 in certain counties. So what we're really  
13 looking at is there is across the preparedness --  
14 across the spectrum of grant funds is really to  
15 take a look at which grant funds can be used for  
16 certain things because, notoriously, we've gone  
17 to certain grant funds for certain things in the  
18 past and the notice of funding opportunities  
19 change.

20 So really taking a look at that, we hold  
21 annually a grant workshop where we talk about all  
22 the grants that we have available. It could be  
23 emergency management service grants. It could be  
24 the hazardous materials grants, homeland  
25 securities grants, and all of the grant programs

1 and the ins and outs of those programs. So  
2 actually, counties can actually tap in to those  
3 funds and use them appropriately to be able to  
4 support their training.

5 And if you'd like the numbers -- for just  
6 the HMEP for Delaware County was \$24,240.

7 REPRESENTATIVE KRUEGER: \$24,000?

8 DIRECTOR PADFIELD: \$24,000 and another  
9 \$12,000. Again, it's --

10 REPRESENTATIVE KRUEGER: That seems very  
11 low to me.

12 DIRECTOR PADFIELD: Right. And they're  
13 predicated on -- so that's a Federal grant that  
14 we receive, so --

15 REPRESENTATIVE KRUEGER: Okay. Again,  
16 I'd love to talk to you about what else we could  
17 be doing to make sure funding is there so that  
18 our emergency response teams are ready to respond  
19 and keep us safe.

20 One other question. Fire Commissioner  
21 Trego, it's good to see you again. Thank you so  
22 much for coming to Delaware County for the 100th  
23 anniversary of the Milmont Fire Company last  
24 year. I know that my volunteers were very, very  
25 excited to see you, and I wanted to thank you for

1 making the trip.

2 A number of recommendations from the SR 6  
3 report have been moving through the legislature.  
4 It was a report, I know, so many of our  
5 volunteers spent time giving input on what we  
6 could be doing to better support our volunteer  
7 first responders, especially our volunteer  
8 firefighters. There's a number of bills that  
9 have made it through the House, but they're  
10 sitting in the Senate awaiting action.

11 Do you have any sense of what the highest  
12 priority recommendations are from your vantage  
13 point as you travel the State?

14 FIRE COMMISSIONER TREGO: Sure. One of  
15 the first things I hear is recruitment/retention.  
16 What can we do to recruit people? What can we do  
17 to retain them? That seems to be one of the  
18 higher ones. The other one is training. There  
19 are misconceptions that the State requires  
20 firefighters to be trained. There is no State  
21 requirement for training for firefighters.

22 Our entry level training program that we  
23 provide through our local level system at the  
24 State Fire Academy is broken down into four  
25 modules, which, if taken in entirety, it will end



1 up with the knowledge, skills, and abilities to  
2 have someone certified to a national level of  
3 firefighter 1. But when we developed those  
4 programs back in 2004, then Commissioner Mann  
5 insisted that we do them in levels.

6 So the first level was the introduction  
7 to fire service. The second is fire ground  
8 support. Third is exterior firefighter. And  
9 fourth is interior firefighter. Since then,  
10 we've added one more, which is advanced  
11 firefighter, which would then get -- at the  
12 culmination of that, would then give them the  
13 knowledge and skills and ability to go to  
14 firefighter 2, should they desire -- decide to  
15 certify.

16 So getting back to those levels,  
17 Commissioner Mann was insistent upon, he wanted  
18 to have levels that would work for a fire chief  
19 that said, hey, look, I just got this person in,  
20 they're not going to fight fire. I just want to  
21 get them trained to be able to drive the  
22 apparatus. So in that case, they could take  
23 maybe the first two levels and then train to the  
24 vehicle that they would be driving, take an  
25 emergency vehicle operations course, and should

1 be good to go.

2 And as I get out and speak at the fire  
3 and EMS seminars, I try to impress upon the  
4 people that, yes, I'm a strong proponent of  
5 firefighter 1 and certification, but I also  
6 recognize that the way the Commonwealth is set  
7 up, the responsibility for the level of training  
8 lies at the local level. And until there is  
9 legislation that states everybody will be at a  
10 certain level, let's use the program that we have  
11 and get that training back on the local level so  
12 that it meets the needs of each individual area.

13 Just like you said, it's totally  
14 different in Delaware County than what it is in  
15 my county, in Juniata County. It's a world of  
16 difference in what they need to train on. And  
17 our goal is to, as we move forward, not make  
18 training easier, but make it easier to get to.  
19 So that's what our effort is trying to -- as we  
20 move forward, what we're trying to do is get to  
21 that point so that -- and we get rid of the  
22 misconception that everybody has to be a  
23 firefighter 1.

24 REPRESENTATIVE KRUEGER: Thank you for  
25 supporting our volunteers.

1 FIRE COMMISSIONER TREGO: Sure.

2 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: Representative  
3 DeLozier.

4 REPRESENTATIVE DELOZIER: Thank you,  
5 Mr. Chairman.

6 Thank you. I'm over here, you guys.  
7 Thank you for being here. And actually, I'm  
8 going to kind of continue on the same line of  
9 questioning with our firefighters. That is a  
10 huge issue.

11 Saturday night, I'll be at a fire dinner  
12 in my local township in Lisburn. And time and  
13 time again, I hear from my local municipalities  
14 about the issue of volunteers and how we keep  
15 them, but I was looking at the performance-based  
16 budgeting and looking at all of the numbers that  
17 you guys have and two things popped in that I  
18 thought were kind of a bad thing, but that's why  
19 I want to question you on them. And that is that  
20 you don't have the authority to find out how many  
21 we have in the State of Pennsylvania. And in the  
22 report, it states that Pennsylvania is the  
23 third-highest in the nation on its reliance of  
24 volunteers.

25 we do have paid firefighters, and we're

1 grateful for those in our bigger urban areas, but  
2 I know my entire district, it's all volunteers.  
3 We just had two in Mechanicsburg that merged.  
4 We've talked about that issue. We had two  
5 serving the Borough. They have merged. But my  
6 question about the ability for you guys to count  
7 them, what is it that you need in order for you  
8 to be able to do that?

9 The numbers in the report talk about the  
10 fact that you have, you know, starting in '17,  
11 '18, and '19, you have how many companies. So my  
12 question is, why can't we know how many are in  
13 those companies?

14 FIRE COMMISSIONER TREGO: The data that  
15 we collect right now is from those that apply for  
16 the grant.

17 REPRESENTATIVE DELOZIER: Okay.

18 FIRE COMMISSIONER TREGO: For the annual  
19 grant, the one --

20 REPRESENTATIVE DELOZIER: So these  
21 numbers of departments are only those that apply  
22 for grants?

23 FIRE COMMISSIONER TREGO: If it's in our  
24 database, yes.

25 REPRESENTATIVE DELOZIER: Okay.

1 FIRE COMMISSIONER TREGO: Okay. We have  
2 no mechanism at this point to have every fire  
3 company register with us, if you will. There's  
4 no regulatory authority on our part to do so.

5 REPRESENTATIVE DELOZIER: And would that  
6 require a legislative action, or is that a PEMA  
7 or an action within the Agency, a regulatory --

8 FIRE COMMISSIONER TREGO: I would say  
9 that would require legislation.

10 REPRESENTATIVE DELOZIER: Legislation,  
11 okay. Good to know. The second thing in line  
12 with that is looking at the numbers, as well.  
13 There's a gap as to how many actually apply for  
14 the loans that are available, as well as applying  
15 for the grants. So in taking the numbers, even  
16 going with '19, is 2,130 actual fire departments,  
17 800 EMS. But the numbers, there's a gap there of  
18 approximately over 400 companies that didn't  
19 apply.

20 So how can we better educate or outreach  
21 to those entities and say there's dollars here  
22 that we're appropriating for your use and we want  
23 you to use them? I mean, I know all the dollars  
24 get used, don't get me wrong, but how do we reach  
25 out to some of those that don't apply?

1 FIRE COMMISSIONER TREGO: My best bet is  
2 through, number one, talking to them.

3 REPRESENTATIVE DELOZIER: Okay.

4 FIRE COMMISSIONER TREGO: As we go out  
5 and speak, you know --

6 REPRESENTATIVE DELOZIER: Do you go out  
7 to each of the Departments?

8 FIRE COMMISSIONER TREGO: Not to each of  
9 the Departments, but I try to reach at least in  
10 the county level.

11 REPRESENTATIVE DELOZIER: Okay.

12 FIRE COMMISSIONER TREGO: And then, when  
13 invited, I will try to meet with the awards  
14 banquets, if you will, or the length of service  
15 awards for folks that are retiring. And --

16 REPRESENTATIVE DELOZIER: Do you --  
17 oh, I'm sorry.

18 FIRE COMMISSIONER TREGO: -- at those  
19 times -- I'm sorry.

20 REPRESENTATIVE DELOZIER: I was going to  
21 say, do you think there's a reason why the loans  
22 have gone down? It's only -- it's a third of  
23 what it was in 2015. Is there a reason for that  
24 lack of use or less people applying for them?

25 FIRE COMMISSIONER TREGO: On the loans?

1           REPRESENTATIVE DELOZIER:  Yes, on the  
2    loan side.

3           FIRE COMMISSIONER TREGO:  I think there  
4    was a period of time when the interest rates were  
5    kind of equal, so --

6           REPRESENTATIVE DELOZIER:  It didn't  
7    matter.

8           FIRE COMMISSIONER TREGO:  It wasn't  
9    really a --

10          REPRESENTATIVE DELOZIER:  It wasn't a  
11   benefit.

12          FIRE COMMISSIONER TREGO:  -- if they  
13   would rather deal with their local bank than us.

14          REPRESENTATIVE DELOZIER:  Okay.  And what  
15   is the definition of a firefighter to you, in the  
16   sense that I know, in knowing my companies and  
17   going to their dinners, and they award, you know,  
18   the top 10 responders.  And it's always the same  
19   guys pretty much, men and women, I will say.  
20   we're lucky in a couple of ours, we've really  
21   been encouraging our youth and getting our junior  
22   firefighters in there.

23                 But I know that there's a number of  
24   folks, men and women, who have been with it a  
25   number of years and they don't go out on calls

1       any more. So if you are looking at the number of  
2       people that are standing for a particular fire  
3       company, is there an activity, you know, how  
4       active you are that would determine what is an  
5       actual firefighter?

6                If we should count how many firefighters  
7       are actually volunteering in our communities,  
8       would that be useful or does it not matter?

9                FIRE COMMISSIONER TREGO: I think that  
10       would be useful, but I think an additional piece  
11       of data that would be even more beneficial is who  
12       supports them. If it's a volunteer company, who  
13       is supporting them?

14               If you take --

15               REPRESENTATIVE DELOZIER: From the  
16       municipality, you mean, dollars?

17               FIRE COMMISSIONER TREGO: The  
18       municipality, as well as administrative offices  
19       within the fire department.

20               REPRESENTATIVE DELOZIER: How many there  
21       are?

22               FIRE COMMISSIONER TREGO: Yeah. When I  
23       speak at the banquets, I ask how many of you in  
24       here are an officer, hands come up. And then I  
25       say, how many of you are wearing more than one



1 hat, and everybody --

2 REPRESENTATIVE DELOZIER: I'm sure a lot  
3 of them.

4 FIRE COMMISSIONER TREGO: -- everybody  
5 you talk to is wearing two and three hats.

6 REPRESENTATIVE DELOZIER: Sure.

7 FIRE COMMISSIONER TREGO: Whereas, years  
8 ago, we had more community involvement of people  
9 that were not active firefighters that were there  
10 to support them financially, for example, in the  
11 administrative offices, president,  
12 vice-president, secretary. So now, if you talk  
13 about one of the retainment problems, we have  
14 fewer people, but now they're all doing more.

15 REPRESENTATIVE DELOZIER: Okay.

16 FIRE COMMISSIONER TREGO: Because they're  
17 trying to fill out all those offices.

18 REPRESENTATIVE DELOZIER: And I'll throw  
19 one thing out while I'm getting scowled at by the  
20 Chairman.

21 Do you think the education tax credits  
22 that we passed and the education enhancements to  
23 pay for school -- offer those that have served --  
24 are a benefit and will work in retention?

25 FIRE COMMISSIONER TREGO: I think it will

1 help in recruitment. I don't know about  
2 retention, but yes, I think it will help in  
3 recruitment.

4 REPRESENTATIVE DELOZIER: Okay. Thank  
5 you very much.

6 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: Representative  
7 Comitta.

8 REPRESENTATIVE COMITTA: Thank you,  
9 Mr. Chairman.

10 Good afternoon. Thanks so much for being  
11 here with us. I want to thank PEMA for sending a  
12 representative to each of the Mariner Pipeline  
13 Safety Meetings that I've been holding in our  
14 district. We've had DEP, PUC, PEMA, county  
15 emergency management personnel, elected  
16 officials, and Sunoco at the table talking about  
17 public safety as a priority and communicating  
18 with each other. One of the things I was  
19 surprised at at the beginning of these  
20 conversations was how many people had not  
21 actually sat at the table together before to talk  
22 about these things, so it's a great opportunity.  
23 Thank you so much for being there.

24 Representative Krueger asked my question  
25 about the emergency management funding, so I am

1 not going to ask that. And she also addressed  
2 some of the firefighter -- volunteer firefighter  
3 needs in recruitment and so on. In West Chester,  
4 we have three volunteer fire companies that make  
5 up our department. I always say 100 percent  
6 volunteer, 100 percent certified, 100 percent  
7 awesome. So -- and I'm a member of all, of  
8 course.

9 So that being said -- and Mr. Fire  
10 Commissioner, you talked about wearing a number  
11 of hats. Many of my police officers, when I was  
12 mayor of West Chester, also are firefighters,  
13 lots of them. Or if they're not a firefighter,  
14 they're, you know, ambulance drivers, EMTs, you  
15 know, whatever they're doing. So everybody is  
16 wearing a lot of hats.

17 And as mayor, I was always very concerned  
18 about the wellness, especially the emotional and  
19 mental health wellness, of these first  
20 responders. And we know that police and  
21 firefighters are more likely to die by suicide  
22 than in the line of duty.

23 FIRE COMMISSIONER TREGO: Correct.

24 REPRESENTATIVE COMITTA: And according to  
25 the Fire Administration, PTSD and depression, as

1 well as divorce and substance abuse among  
2 firefighters and police officers, are nearly five  
3 times higher than the civilian population, five  
4 times.

5 what is being done in your world to help  
6 promote mental health awareness among these first  
7 responders?

8 FIRE COMMISSIONER TREGO: well, thank you  
9 for your commitment to the fire service as being  
10 a mayor.

11 Several things that we are doing in  
12 looking at the mental health and wellness issues,  
13 if you will, physical health and wellness issues.  
14 Two of the things that we have as top priorities  
15 are cancer awareness and behavioral health. We  
16 recently finished a -- it's a PowerPoint  
17 presentation that we intend to make into a video  
18 that every class, every instructor can show. And  
19 it will address those several issues.

20 I think overarching the big issue is this  
21 cultural thing and the stigma that goes with the  
22 job of, for example, we want them to wear clean  
23 gear now. For years, if your gear was clean, you  
24 weren't doing anything. You weren't a  
25 firefighter. The same thing is -- if you saw

1 something on an incident that bothered you, suck  
2 it up, kid, that's part of the job. So what we  
3 need to do is change that culture and the stigma  
4 that goes with it.

5 several things that we are doing there is  
6 we have found some people that are willing to  
7 come out and talk about, hey, I had a problem and  
8 I went and got help. But I think the key thing  
9 is -- and again, as I mentioned, when I go out  
10 and speak at banquets, I usually end with talk to  
11 each other. You're a family. You know your  
12 family that you fight fire with probably  
13 sometimes better than the family that you live  
14 with, your blood family. So you know when  
15 there's something the matter with someone. And  
16 we have to get past that stigma of -- we can't be  
17 in that attitude of, hey, it bothered me.

18 And again, we're human beings. Every one  
19 of us is going to see something eventually, if  
20 we're in the business long enough, that the  
21 normal public does not see. So again, what we  
22 are trying to do is incorporate that into the  
23 training. We've added help lines to our website.  
24 There is a phone number on there, and there's a  
25 banner for folks to go get help. The key thing

1 is to get them to come out of their shell and to  
2 say, I want to talk.

3 REPRESENTATIVE COMITTA: Thank you so  
4 very much for taking care of our first responders  
5 because they are always there to take care of us.  
6 Thank you.

7 FIRE COMMISSIONER TREGO: You're welcome.

8 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: Representative  
9 White.

10 REPRESENTATIVE WHITE: Thank you very  
11 much, Chairman.

12 I just wanted to talk a little bit about  
13 the line item, the search and rescue program.  
14 And you have the \$250,000 -- I think it's a  
15 thousand-dollar-cut here. Yeah.

16 Can you just explain the reason for the  
17 \$250,000 cut?

18 DIRECTOR PADFIELD: Sure. So this grant  
19 is traditionally added, obviously, as part of a  
20 process and further defined in the annual kind of  
21 fiscal code. So we don't count on it being  
22 there. Obviously, if it is added in, we are more  
23 than welcome to be able to distribute that. That  
24 is really kind of the key, and that's why it's  
25 been zeroed out.

1           REPRESENTATIVE WHITE: But isn't this  
2 money typically used for like animal search and  
3 rescue?

4           DIRECTOR PADFIELD: It is. So that  
5 \$250,000 usually goes to the pet and vet for the  
6 working dog center. And they do some tremendous  
7 work associated with that. So they really do a  
8 nice job. And really, the canines that we see  
9 and the canines that they actually train are  
10 really specialized tools. And you know,  
11 everybody likes to, you know, be able to go up  
12 and obviously, you know, pet the dogs and see the  
13 dogs, but ultimately, they are really a tool that  
14 is used for a very specialized purpose. And  
15 there are numbers of purposes across the board,  
16 and they do some tremendous work.

17           REPRESENTATIVE WHITE: Yeah. I mean, I  
18 just am a firm believer that they do lifesaving  
19 work and --

20           DIRECTOR PADFIELD: They do.

21           REPRESENTATIVE WHITE: -- and I feel that  
22 line item is very important and I would hope that  
23 it's something that you advocate for to make sure  
24 that it's included and not cut and, you know,  
25 maybe you feel that it's nice to have, but I

1 think it's really important to the work that gets  
2 done here in the Commonwealth to help keep people  
3 safe and, you know, potentially save their life  
4 when there are disasters.

5 DIRECTOR PADFIELD: It is key. And the  
6 -- I guess the challenge is that those tools are  
7 few and far between. So that's why, really, that  
8 program is really critical. And like I said, if  
9 you've been to the program or you've worked  
10 around any of the canines that they've actually  
11 trained, the folks that run the program are very  
12 committed. I know a number of them personally  
13 and they're really specialized tools that we  
14 really need for certain things like live find  
15 canines, those types of things. We don't need  
16 them all the time, but when you really need them,  
17 there's no other tool to be able to do the job.

18 REPRESENTATIVE WHITE: What are some of  
19 the funding sources that are used for response  
20 teams, like the State incident management team,  
21 the urban search and rescue, and the Pennsylvania  
22 helicopter aquatic rescue team?

23 Can you just talk about a little bit  
24 about how those are organized and supported, and  
25 are these all Federally supported or are these



1 also state?

2 DIRECTOR PADFIELD: So many of those  
3 teams are stood up originally by use of -- the  
4 urban search and rescue system in the State was  
5 stood up after September 11th. And that used a  
6 combination of GGO funds, and then a lot of it  
7 transitioned to Homeland Security grant program  
8 funds; same thing with the helicopter aquatic  
9 rescue team.

10 when Homeland Security grant program  
11 funding was plentiful, a lot of these specialized  
12 resources stood up. And now with the plateau of  
13 that funding, it becomes harder to be able to  
14 maintain some of those capabilities, but also,  
15 what was needed 15 years ago may not necessarily  
16 be a current threat or may not be a threat in the  
17 same vein.

18 So really, we take a look at rightsizing  
19 those teams. One of the teams that actually has  
20 worked out extremely well is -- it's a  
21 combination with the State Fire Commissioner's  
22 Office, the Department of Health, and the Fish  
23 and Boat Commission. It's really taking a look  
24 at the swift water teams that we have across the  
25 State. So we really started off with a small

1 number of these. There's really a voluntary  
2 rescue recognition standard for those teams.

3 And a lot of those are individual  
4 agencies. They're fire companies that decided  
5 that they wanted to meet this standard, and they  
6 either funded themselves or they worked with a  
7 region and actually funded through some limited  
8 Homeland Security grant dollars that are  
9 available. And now, that program has grown to  
10 over 50 teams that we have qualified across the  
11 State that we have the ability to be able to tap  
12 in and move if needed during larger disasters,  
13 but the funding is always the issue with those  
14 teams. The other big thing that we run into with  
15 those teams is how they're organized and actually  
16 whether their responders are adequately covered.

17 workers' comp becomes a huge thing  
18 because of issues related to -- some of these  
19 teams are ad hoc, so they're regional teams. So  
20 you may have two or three members from a couple  
21 of departments that come together to be able to  
22 form the team. And the challenge is  
23 understanding the workers' comp coverage that  
24 they bring with them or maybe don't bring with  
25 them from their own agency and own team.

1           So they're the things that we are taking  
2 a look at. And obviously, to rewrite a Title 35,  
3 they're some of the things that we have taken a  
4 look at in the future to be able to make sure  
5 there's adequate workers' comp coverage for those  
6 folks that are on those special teams.

7           REPRESENTATIVE WHITE: All right. Thank  
8 you very much.

9           MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: Representative  
10 Kim.

11           REPRESENTATIVE KIM: Up here. Good  
12 afternoon.

13           So this is more for the Fire  
14 Commissioner. In my district, I have a township  
15 fire department, a borough volunteer fire  
16 department, and a paid fire department. So I get  
17 to see how they all operate and they're all very  
18 different, very different personalities, funding  
19 sources, and whatnot. I think, you know, lately  
20 the legislature has put out bills to support  
21 volunteer firefighters, which I'm glad to see  
22 incentives, but Commissioner, you know, I think  
23 we take volunteer firefighters for granted. And  
24 I don't want us to throw out laws and bills to  
25 help and just hope that we get more.

1           Do you have a database to see if there's  
2           an improvement, when is it dangerously low? I  
3           know that fire departments talk to each other and  
4           they'll help each other with fires, so there will  
5           be some coverage, but when is it dangerously low  
6           where we have to stop all things and go into  
7           regionalization or mandated residential fire  
8           sprinklers or countywide -- when are we at that  
9           tipping point, from your vantage point,  
10          Commissioner?

11           FIRE COMMISSIONER TREGO: Well, first  
12          off, we don't have the database to search that  
13          and provide those numbers. If we go by what  
14          reports are coming to us, we're in that situation  
15          now in some areas where you're having anywhere  
16          from three to four mutual aid companies coming in  
17          to support one company at a structure fire that  
18          they normally handled on their own. And I think  
19          the perception that the public gains out of that  
20          is, well, there's nothing the matter with the  
21          fire service.

22           REPRESENTATIVE KIM: Right.

23           FIRE COMMISSIONER TREGO: They look out  
24          and see all this apparatus at the fire and they  
25          don't realize that they're \$500,000 or \$1.2

1 million taxicabs to get enough firefighters to  
2 the scene to safely take care of the incident, so  
3 -- and I think it varies. As you stated, you  
4 have career, you have -- throughout the  
5 Commonwealth and the demographics that continue  
6 to change, where we used to see everybody trying  
7 to move out of the city and get into a rural  
8 setting. Now, we're seeing more of the -- in  
9 some areas -- more of the exodus, if you will,  
10 from the rural to somewhere in the urban areas.

11 with new technology and hey, I don't need  
12 a car in a garage, I can call Uber. I might as  
13 well live in the big city. So we're seeing that  
14 with some generations. And this information I'm  
15 getting by going out and speaking to individual  
16 groups, as well. So I don't have a good answer  
17 for you, other than it varies the whole way  
18 across the Commonwealth. And all of us that took  
19 part in SR 6 and the recommendations recognized  
20 there's no silver bullet in that. There's not  
21 one thing in there that is going to correct all  
22 the problems or build back the volunteers to what  
23 we had back in the '70s.

24 REPRESENTATIVE KIM: So Commissioner, my  
25 last question would be, from your vantage point,

1        what county, what area is doing it right that you  
2        think could be a pattern for the rest of the  
3        Commonwealth in terms of cooperation, in terms  
4        of, I don't know, fundraising recruitment? Is  
5        there one region that's doing it right that maybe  
6        we can emulate?

7                    FIRE COMMISSIONER TREGO: Well, it's hard  
8        to come up with one individual -- or I'm sorry,  
9        one region. The one that's most fresh in my  
10       memory was I was, this past weekend, at a banquet  
11       to honor a fire chief who had served 27 years as  
12       chief. They had wonderful support from their  
13       community. They still had that what I call the  
14       old-time, this is the hub of our social activity.  
15       And even the people that were there and were  
16       honored or thanked by the fire companies were  
17       from all disciplines, you know, anywhere from a  
18       homeowner to folks that helped with the annual  
19       fair and so on.

20                    It was just that whole hub of community  
21       support. And that town was Hughesville. So I  
22       would say what they're doing is working. And  
23       there's a myriad of other ones out there. And  
24       again, not to skirt the issue, but it depends on  
25       the type of area. To compare one to another, it

1 all depends on, you know, whether they're all  
2 volunteer, they went to combination or they're  
3 career.

4 REPRESENTATIVE KIM: Thank you for your  
5 responses and thank you for what you do.

6 Thank you.

7 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: Representative  
8 Gabler.

9 REPRESENTATIVE GABLER: Thank you,  
10 Mr. Chairman. And thank you to members of the  
11 panel. It's great to be able to spend some time  
12 today talking about some of the most important  
13 issues that face our Commonwealth. And although  
14 when we look at PEMA, we're not seeing the big  
15 impact on our State budget, there's other  
16 departments that make a much larger appearance on  
17 our balance sheet, but what you do and what we  
18 see in our communities is really difficult to  
19 overstate.

20 I wanted to take an opportunity,  
21 specifically, to talk to Commissioner Trego. You  
22 and I have had the opportunity to work very  
23 closely together on coming up with what some of  
24 these solutions need to be. And as we've  
25 discussed, we know that we're in the middle of a

1 volunteer crisis in the Commonwealth. And it was  
2 interesting in the answer that you just gave, you  
3 talked about the old-time idea of a fire  
4 department being the hub of our social activity.  
5 And that is such an insightful comment because I  
6 think that part of what we're facing is a  
7 demographic shift.

8 what people are looking for out of their  
9 organizations is different. It used to be that  
10 people would go to the firehouse to figure out  
11 what's going on in town. Now, they scroll  
12 Facebook or they scroll Instagram. So we're  
13 fighting some things that we can't fix in a  
14 budget process or fix with a government policy,  
15 but there are certainly things we can do to help  
16 because we know that people have gotten busy,  
17 people have gotten involved in a lot of other  
18 things that take up their time.

19 And so, as we've discussed, I think that  
20 some of the things that really take up the time  
21 of our volunteers is one, training, and two,  
22 fundraising. And so the question is, how can we  
23 address some of the challenges with fundraising  
24 and training to then make lives easier on our  
25 volunteers, to make it easier for them to serve



1 their communities?

2 So I wanted to ask you to maybe outline  
3 some of the things that we could do to make a  
4 marked difference to make life easier on people  
5 who want to step up and volunteer for their  
6 community.

7 FIRE COMMISSIONER TREGO: Sure. Let me  
8 tackle the one that I don't know the answer to  
9 first, and that is the fundraising. I don't know  
10 how we can get back to what we were before  
11 because the cost of all of the equipment has gone  
12 up dramatically. An example, one of the first  
13 pieces of apparatus that I helped get was  
14 \$50,000. Today, you couldn't buy that same piece  
15 for less than \$650,000.

16 when I asked a chief one time, they had a  
17 used aerial device, I said, what did you pay for  
18 that? He said, I don't know in dollars, but I  
19 can tell you in chicken wings. So that's kind of  
20 the issues that you run into. The cost of  
21 equipment has gone up. The people that are there  
22 to help do that, to help raise that money, are no  
23 longer there. So I don't know what the answer is  
24 to that, but I think the public needs to  
25 recognize how much the cost of all of this has

1 gone up.

2 REPRESENTATIVE GABLER: And if I could  
3 interject one little thing. One of the things  
4 that your office had worked very closely with me  
5 and my colleagues on was a little tweak. We know  
6 we have to reauthorize the State Fire  
7 Commissioner's Grant Program this year. And when  
8 we had put HB 1834 through the House Veterans  
9 Affairs and Emergency Preparedness Committee, I  
10 know your office worked with us on putting  
11 together an amendment that would allow, since you  
12 talked about these bigger projects, whether it's  
13 the cost of a building, the cost of a truck. And  
14 one of the proposals that we need to get over the  
15 goal line and past the House and to the Senate --  
16 it's still sitting there -- is the fact that we  
17 could allow volunteer fire companies to put  
18 together up to five years of their grant in order  
19 to save towards something bigger because  
20 sometimes we're talking about funding.

21 So the idea of being able to match local  
22 funding with some sort of a grant or a loan  
23 program, to be able to stack those things  
24 together would be helpful. And that was  
25 something that your office was very supportive

1 of. So I'm hoping that your office, whether in  
2 1834 or a similar vehicle, we can get that  
3 provision done when we reauthorize that program  
4 this year.

5 FIRE COMMISSIONER TREGO: Correct.  
6 That's a great idea, because as it stands now,  
7 you can't hang onto that money. You can't put it  
8 in and -- you have to spend it within that year  
9 and provide us the documentation of what you  
10 spent it on, yes. So I think that's an excellent  
11 idea, especially those people that want to save  
12 enough for a down payment, if you will.

13 REPRESENTATIVE GABLER: And I appreciate  
14 that. And that was an idea that came locally out  
15 of one of my local fire departments as they were  
16 trying to save for a bigger project. So that's  
17 something I want to continue working with you on.  
18 If we could continue on to talk a little bit more  
19 about kind of the 600-pound gorilla in the room,  
20 the training issue. And we had a little bit of a  
21 discussion, I know with some of my colleagues  
22 earlier, but in my area, we're talking about  
23 rural access to training.

24 Somebody is trying to get to a fire  
25 school, it might be a long drive, but I know we

1 have opportunities to try to put together some  
2 online training. Instead of people spending  
3 their weekends, they could do it in the comfort  
4 of their living room on a Tuesday night.

5           Could you talk a little bit about where  
6 we can go with that and where we need to go  
7 further to partner with you, what legislation  
8 might be needed to help get your office where it  
9 needs to be to help expand access to training and  
10 make it easier?

11           FIRE COMMISSIONER TREGO: Sure. Thank  
12 you very much for the opportunity to sit and  
13 discuss that with you. Since we last spoke, we  
14 did receive information from our vendor who we  
15 purchased our curriculum from for our entry-level  
16 training program, who is willing to work with us  
17 to put as much of that in an online format as  
18 they can. So our initial goal is to take that  
19 first program, that first 16 hours of the intro  
20 to the fire service, which -- and I'll start with  
21 this, I believe that we need to meet the needs of  
22 those that want to take online training.

23           But we also have to recognize, this is a  
24 very dangerous job. You can't learn how to put a  
25 ladder up, how to advance a hose, how to put

1 self-contained breathing apparatus on by watching  
2 a video. Okay. So having said that, what we  
3 want to do is take that learning process of the  
4 psychomotor skills, if you will, and make that  
5 separate. Okay. So our goal is to try by the  
6 end of this year to have that first entry level  
7 training program 99.9 percent online.

8 At the end of that 16 hours, the student  
9 is to demonstrate three skills. Okay. Rather  
10 than have them go somewhere for 16 hours and take  
11 the face-to-face program, what we'd like to have  
12 available is they can take that online, take a  
13 written quiz. And then someone in their station  
14 who is qualified can have them demonstrate those  
15 skills in front of them, sign them off, and they  
16 don't have to leave the station or their home to  
17 get it done.

18 I think that's a win-win because it's  
19 less time that they have to be in a classroom and  
20 the other is they're actually working with the  
21 equipment that they're going to be expected to  
22 use when they work with the fire department.

23 REPRESENTATIVE GABLER: I'm out of time,  
24 but I just want to say I'm all in on working with  
25 you to make this a reality, and let's continue

1 moving the ball forward. Thank you so much for  
2 the work you do.

3 FIRE COMMISSIONER TREGO: Thank you for  
4 your help.

5 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: Representative  
6 Sanchez.

7 REPRESENTATIVE SANCHEZ: Thank you,  
8 Mr. Chairman.

9 I'm up here, gentlemen. Thank you for  
10 all you do to keep the Commonwealth safe. I want  
11 to touch back on one issue again for the Fire  
12 Commissioner. You're very popular today,  
13 Commissioner. Representative Gabler mentioned  
14 the online training and several other  
15 Representatives raised the issue of training.  
16 It's my understanding that's funded in part by,  
17 at least the online training would be, from the  
18 Act 43 of 2017, the so-called fireworks --

19 FIRE COMMISSIONER TREGO: Yes.

20 REPRESENTATIVE SANCHEZ: -- tax. It  
21 allowed for the sale of fireworks, like bottle  
22 rockets and Roman candles, to Pennsylvanians, but  
23 put a 12 percent tax on the sale of those  
24 consumer fireworks, in addition to the six  
25 percent sales tax. I'm happy that that may be --

1 it sounded like some of that is being used for  
2 the online training and that certainly makes  
3 sense in many regards.

4 Have there been or have you noted, your  
5 office noted, an increase in the  
6 fireworks-related fire calls and responses due to  
7 this, that, you know, may have sort of a  
8 diminishing effect?

9 FIRE COMMISSIONER TREGO: Yeah, I  
10 wouldn't have the exact data as far as numbers,  
11 but yes, there's definitely an increase in calls.  
12 There are two other issues to be made aware of  
13 with this new type -- or with allowing more  
14 fireworks, I should say. And that is, a lot of  
15 the fire chiefs have come to us and said, hey,  
16 you know, we're running a lot of calls. When we  
17 get on the scene, if they are doing something  
18 illegal, there's nothing we can do about it,  
19 other than give them a \$50 or a \$100 fine.

20 And you look at the guy that just spent  
21 \$2400, \$2500 on fireworks and he says, yeah,  
22 here's a hundred dollars. I'm going to put my  
23 fireworks off. That's one issue. The other is  
24 the effect that this fireworks has on the  
25 community in regards to PTSD, to folks who have

1       been in the service, to animals. So being able  
2       to enforce some type of regulation that allows  
3       people to safely use the fireworks, but still  
4       protect those that need protected from the  
5       damages that occur, whether it be fire or mental  
6       or physical issues.

7               I could work with the Burn Foundation to  
8       try and give you the number of -- the increased  
9       number of fireworks-related injuries, but I can  
10      tell you every year they tell us that the worst  
11      thing is sparklers, which has --

12              REPRESENTATIVE SANCHEZ: Interesting.

13              FIRE COMMISSIONER TREGO: -- always been  
14      legal.

15              REPRESENTATIVE SANCHEZ: well, thank you  
16      for that. I would be pleased to work with you on  
17      anything you suggest could make it safer. And  
18      I'd also be remiss in not noting that there's  
19      grants proposed or projected at \$800,000 to  
20      emergency medical services out of that, too.

21              FIRE COMMISSIONER TREGO: That's correct.

22              REPRESENTATIVE SANCHEZ: So that's good  
23      with that tax revenue.

24              In switching gears a little bit -- and  
25      the Fire Commissioner is off the hook for this



1 one, I believe. But in the -- a Representative  
2 touched earlier on the coronavirus and  
3 preparations for things like that. On a related  
4 front, it's my understanding there's a \$19.1  
5 million threshold in order to be able to provide  
6 for the Federal disaster funds, you know, if  
7 there was a pandemic, such as coronavirus, we  
8 might hit that immediately.

9 Has there been discussion with your  
10 office of maybe creating smaller, you know, more  
11 localized funding type sources that could, or  
12 pools that could be accessed for, you know, kind  
13 of mini emergencies, if there is such a thing?

14 DIRECTOR PADFIELD: So a couple of  
15 things, the \$19.1 million threshold you talk  
16 about is actually for public assistance. So  
17 that's really for roadway infrastructure damage,  
18 those types of things. If we're looking for  
19 individual assistance, those requirements from  
20 FEMA are a little different. And a lot of times,  
21 for natural disasters, they take a look at number  
22 of houses destroyed, those types of things. So  
23 it depends on whether we're looking for  
24 individual assistance or public assistance.

25 From a coronavirus perspective or a

1 pandemic perspective, I believe recently they've  
2 taken a look at the Federal side to be able to  
3 reallocate funding that was previously earmarked  
4 for Ebola to be able to put it towards  
5 coronavirus. And that money would essentially  
6 trickle down to the States and be used  
7 predominantly through the Department of Health to  
8 be able to support those types of operations.

9 Obviously, if -- and some of the  
10 discussions that we're having right now when we  
11 take a look at planning for this, is really  
12 identifying the triggers where we would need a  
13 state disaster declaration to be able to support  
14 State agencies, support and be able to pay the  
15 State agencies for whatever they need to do to be  
16 able to respond to the coronavirus, but also to  
17 take a look at what that Federal threshold would  
18 be to be able to, you know, apply for a Federal  
19 disaster declaration.

20 So obviously, with a pandemic, that's a  
21 little different. The main funding source,  
22 obviously, is coming through Health & Human  
23 Services, CDC, down through the Department of  
24 Health, which we're in lockstep with. But  
25 obviously, from a smaller perspective, as far as

1 State funds, there hasn't been any discussion to  
2 date regarding what that would look like. From  
3 an Agency perspective, we actually maintain  
4 waiver funds that we can use from year to year to  
5 be able to support things like this from our  
6 State agency perspective and things like that,  
7 something that may not rise to the threshold of  
8 really a State disaster declaration.

9 REPRESENTATIVE SANCHEZ: Thank you for  
10 that answer and for that important clarification.  
11 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

12 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: You're  
13 welcome.

14 Thank you, gentlemen, for being here. My  
15 comments are directed more to the Fire  
16 Commissioner. As a former Chairman for 10 years  
17 of the Fire and Emergency Services Caucus here in  
18 the House, I think we're missing the point on  
19 some of our issues with fire. I'm very active  
20 with a lot of my fire departments. I'm there for  
21 banquets and all kinds of things that they do. I  
22 just swore in a merging fire company, two  
23 companies that merged recently.

24 You know, we talk about retention. And I  
25 really think that's missing the issue because

1 those that are leaving are those who are my age  
2 who are aging out, just like baby boomers are  
3 with a lot of companies. I really think we have  
4 to focus on recruitment. A few years ago I got a  
5 grant for \$5,000 for one of my high schools to do  
6 a test program, and that is to have a trainer  
7 from the Fire Institute, and I believe it was  
8 Maryland because it was on the Maryland border  
9 with the Southeastern School District, to come in  
10 come in and create basically an extramural, extra  
11 intermural activity, whatever you want to call  
12 it, activity after school.

13 And every one of the kids who went  
14 through that program joined one of the fire  
15 companies in that region, every one, and they're  
16 all still there today. I think we're waiting too  
17 long to recruit people. You can't recruit kids,  
18 men and women, when they come out of college. If  
19 you're waiting until they come out of college,  
20 you have lost them. They're paying off their  
21 debts. They're looking for a job. They're going  
22 to a new community, in some cases, that they  
23 didn't grow up in and so they're not familiar.  
24 So they're still searching out what they're doing  
25 in that particular community they're now living

1 in.

2 I believe it's important for us to put  
3 more efforts into recruiting kids in high school  
4 so that they're aware of what's going on in the  
5 local community, so that when they come back,  
6 they're going to have that same commitment they  
7 had before they left. But if we wait until they  
8 come back from school, we're missing an  
9 opportunity. And I think we really have  
10 refocused on the wrong things in trying to save  
11 our volunteer fire companies because, as I say  
12 all the time, you know, if we don't save our  
13 volunteer fire companies, Pennsylvania taxpayers  
14 are going to find probably a \$13 billion dollar  
15 tax increase to pay for the paid fire companies.  
16 And that's a concern to me, not that our paid  
17 firefighters don't do an outstanding job, but  
18 that's a huge financial burden on all the people  
19 of our community, particularly the lower income  
20 families, when they have to pay that tax.

21 So I just think we have to do a better  
22 job of understanding that if we truly want to  
23 save our volunteer fire companies, it has to be  
24 started in the high schools. And if we don't do  
25 that, then we are going to fail in the mission to

1 save our volunteer fire companies. Like I said,  
2 I've proven it in York County that it does work,  
3 it starts at school level. And so just again,  
4 Commissioner, I hope that we can pass that along  
5 to our fire companies. They really have to get  
6 these kids when they're young. I mean, we have a  
7 lot of fire companies that spend a lot of time  
8 with junior firefighters. It's a great program.  
9 But I think we also have to focus more on getting  
10 more kids involved in that program.

11 With that, we're going to reconvene on  
12 Monday morning for the Department of Education at  
13 10:00 a.m. And with that, this hearing is  
14 adjourned.

15 (Whereupon, the hearing concluded.)  
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C E R T I F I C A T E

I hereby certify that the proceedings are contained fully and accurately in the notes taken by me from audio of the within proceedings and that this is a correct transcript of the same.

*Tiffany L. Mast*  
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Tiffany L. Mast  
Court Reporter