



Commonwealth of Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Christina Dettman

(502) 229-2791

Jordan Rowe

(502) 352-3977

CHFS applauds passage of House Bill 1

FRANKFORT, Ky. (July 24, 2019) - The Cabinet for Health and Family Services (CHFS) applauds the passage of House Bill 1, which provides immediate and long-term relief for quasi-government agencies facing soaring pension costs. The affected groups within CHFS include local health departments and community mental health centers.

“CHFS stands ready to support these agencies as they determine the best path forward, and our administration is committed to ensuring continuity of critical services provided by our local health departments and mental health centers,” said CHFS Secretary Adam Meier. “We appreciate the General Assembly’s collective efforts to pass this pension measure, which will allow CHFS to continue working together with our partners to ensure a sustainable public health and mental health system.”

In the last month, Department of Public Health Commissioner Dr. Jeffrey Howard met with 12 of the 18 local health departments at greatest risk for financial insolvency. These agencies are already implementing changes, but the passage of HB 1 will allow them additional time to choose a pension payment option that is best for their individual financial situation.

“Our pension crisis threatens the state’s vitally important public health infrastructure,” said Dr. Howard. “In order to preserve this critical system, our local health departments have begun making significant changes that align with the Cabinet’s community focused transformation plan. With the Cabinet’s support, local health departments are beginning to simplify their service array to focus on core public health, plus critical services such as WIC, HANDS and Harm Reduction/SUD, while also strengthening partnerships with community health clinics.”

“Passage of the pension bill is also critical in protecting the behavioral health safety net,” added Wendy Morris, Commissioner of the Department for Behavioral Health, Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities. “Community Mental Health Centers serve approximately 180,000 people annually, and employ thousands across the Commonwealth. Collectively, the centers have a presence in all 120 counties and provide critical services to people across the lifespan who struggle with mental illness, substance use disorders, and/or developmental and intellectual disabilities.”

Additional information is available at <http://chfs.ky.gov/>.

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The Cabinet for Health and Family Services is home to most of the state's human services and healthcare programs, including the Department for Medicaid Services, the Department for Community Based Services the Department for Public Health, the Department for Aging and Independent Living and the Department for Behavioral Health, Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities. CHFS is one of the largest agencies in state government, with nearly 8,000 full- and part-time employees located across the Commonwealth focused on improving the lives and health of Kentuckians.