



COMMISSIONERS OF CUMBERLAND COUNTY

Vince DiFilippo
Chairman

Jim Hertzler
Vice Chairman

Gary Eichelberger
Secretary

September 11, 2017

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MEDIA CONTACT: Rachel Bryson, Communications Director
717.706.0001

Commissioners Object to State Budget Funding Proposal

Cumberland County, PA – The Cumberland County Commissioners are voicing objections to a proposed funding plan for the 2017-18 state budget. In a letter to the County’s State lawmakers, the commissioners detailed their concerns regarding proposals to take \$40 million from the 911 fund, \$27 million from the Agriculture Conservation Easement Program, \$72 million from the Environmental Stewardship Fund and \$357 million from the Public Transportation Trust Fund, in order to balance the \$32 billion state budget.

The Commissioners said draining money from the dedicated 911 Fund, supported by consumer fees on communication devices, violates the very law that created the Fund, in that it expressly prohibits the transfer of money for “General Fund use by the Commonwealth or counties.” These monies are for the sole purpose of helping to reduce the burden on county property taxpayers for the costs of 911 public safety emergency call centers.

The County’s Farmland Preservation Program could also be deeply impacted by this transfer of funds. In the past 25 years, the program has been successful in preserving more than 17,000 acres of prime farmland and has 10 farms currently in line for preservation. The proposed cuts jeopardize the potential to preserve these approved farms and raise questions on the future of the entire program. Unspent money from the Agriculture Conservation Easement program is not a “surplus.” Those funds are allocated to property owners throughout the state, payable upon successful closing of a conservation easement on their farms.

In addition to the impact to the Farmland Preservation Program, the cuts to the Environmental Stewardship Fund would make it very difficult for non-profit organizations in the County to restore and protect local watersheds, preserve open spaces, and expand trails, parks and greenways.

In their letter to the legislators, the Cumberland County Commissioners stated “While we recognize the tough decisions you face in dealing with the state’s substantial structural budget deficit, while balancing the \$32 billion state budget that many of you voted to approve earlier this summer, we don’t believe that jumbling priorities by robbing from Peter to pay Paul, and threatening important programs, is a responsible solution.”

###

ATTACHED: [Letter from the County Commissioners to Cumberland County State Legislators](#)