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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
HARRISBURG

February 22, 2010

Chairman Dwight Evans, Majority Chairman
House Appropriations Committee
512-E3 Main Capitol
Harrisburg, PA 17120-2203

Chairman William F. Adolph, Jr., Minority Chairman
House Appropriations Committee
245 Main Capitol Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120-2164

Dear Chairmen Evans and Adolph:

I appreciate the opportunity to participate in this year's budget hearing presentation, and would like to submit the following remarks for consideration by the House Appropriations Committee:

Even though there have been signs of hope in both our local and national economy, including a rebound in our nation's stock market and use of federal stimulus monies to create jobs and growth right here in the Commonwealth, there is still much work to be done as we move forward in this budget cycle.

Make no mistake, there's a long way to go – millions of our state's citizens are in dire need of help. We must preserve the social safety net for our most disadvantaged citizens and seniors, making sure they continue to receive the care they require. As we move forward with this budget, we cannot lose sight of the fact there are so many families in need this year.

During this budget year, we must find new ways to create jobs, stimulate local economies, and further fund education so our students can compete in the global marketplace. These are no easy tasks, but I know the members of your committee will work hard for our citizens and their priorities.

As a member of the Governor's Stimulus Oversight Commission, I have seen firsthand the positive effect of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) on the state. 84,000 jobs in Pennsylvania were directly created or saved by the federal stimulus program, an astounding number when put in perspective. These are good, family-sustaining jobs and many will be in place long after the stimulus ends.

ARRA monies were used to fund nearly \$1 billion of transportation projects, many of which put local contractors to work and helped to rebuild our state's crumbling infrastructure. This money is not unlimited, and we must now begin to prepare for the time when the federal government no longer provides these dollars, specifically by being good stewards of these funds now.

Education funding should not be undervalued in the discussion on balancing the state budget – only by increasing our student's funding levels can we ensure our student's stay competitive.

Governor Edward G. Rendell has proposed \$354.8 million of additional state dollars for the basic education subsidy and an overall increase in the amount of funding for education in the amount of \$448 million, to total \$12.3 billion. This has two dramatic, positive effects; making sure each child has the opportunity to earn a first-rate education, and helping to keep the school taxes level for property owners.

As your committee hears presentations from each of the departments, I ask that you keep in mind our citizen's repeated calls for responsible spending here in Harrisburg. With declining revenues must come hard choices, and I urge you to craft a workable, balanced approach that does not cause a raise in the Personal Income Tax or create new deficits.

As you and I know from listening to our constituents, jobs are the first priority on many working family's minds. With unemployment still high nationwide, and Pennsylvania facing the lingering effects of the recession, there must be a renewed focus on job creation.

With this in mind, funding for the Department of Labor and Industry's General Fund must be held, and even increased. Specifically, the department has excellent workforce development programs, job training programs, and Pennsylvania CareerLink centers throughout the state. These are invaluable for those seeking jobs and serve to provide workers with the skills necessary to succeed. Any cut to the funding for the department would counter the positive effects these programs have for our citizens, and would only further set back those who are out of work.

The House Democratic Caucus worked hard during the last budget season to not enact new taxes, preserve our vital social services, and provide citizens with a budget that continued the state programs they need. By working together, we can provide our state with a fair and balanced budget that will serve all of our citizens.

We are in an historic time, and the choices we make now will affect our state for years to come. By making informed and wise decisions, we ensure future growth and prosperity for this great Commonwealth.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jennifer L. Mann". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Jennifer" being more prominent than the last name "Mann".

Rep. Jennifer L. Mann
Majority Caucus Secretary
132nd Legislative District
Pennsylvania House of Representatives