



2021 Annual Report



Dear friend,

School-based health center work has never been for the faint of the heart. I thought that working in the field pre-pandemic was hard, but the work took on a whole new urgency these past 18 months. Besides being gratifying and important, I find success to highlight along the way. One such highlight was the formulation of the Pennsylvania School-Based Health Alliance (PSBHA).

After “volunteering” to be the emerging affiliate for the past seven years, it was gratifying to be accepted by the national School-Based Health Alliance as the official affiliate last year and gaining official non-profit status in 2021. In 2021, our first year up and running, we were able to strengthen school-based health services by advocating for public funding for SBHCs; providing regulatory support including input on developing SBHC supportive policies and coaching new and established SBHCs on best practices and new models of care.

Most rewarding, though, is that we did this work alongside our members from Chambersburg, Erie, Scranton and everywhere in between. The Merriam Webster dictionary defines strength in numbers as “a group of people has more influence or power than one person.” We have certainly lived that mantra this year. I am honored to present you with our first annual report highlighting our work from the past year.

Wishes for a healthy 2022,
Julie Cousler Emig
Executive Director

Happenings Atop the Hill(s): Year in Review in Harrisburg and Washington, D.C.

PSBHA met with elected officials, agency directors and Governor Wolf appointees spreading the word about school-based health centers and the critically important role they play in advancing health equity for the Commonwealth’s students.

February 2021

During School-Based Health Awareness month, PSBHA held multiple meetings with state representatives and senators. We convened the meeting with PSBHA staff, practitioners and community health workers so our elected officials could see the full picture of how SBHCs take a holistic approach to fighting health inequity.

April 2021

PSBHA reached out to the Pennsylvania congressional delegation to advocate for Congress to include a \$100 million appropriation in the fourth coronavirus response package. The funding would create a new grant program within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) to support school-based health centers (SBHCs). Though not successful, it set up a later win...

May 2021

PSBHA turned its attention back to the State House and Senate to advocate for using federal stimulus dollars to fund a proposal to invest \$1.3 million in Pennsylvania SBHCs to expand mental health services. After hearing repeatedly the priority from legislative leaders around mental health, PSBHA crafted a proposal that would have expanded mental health capacity and data collection and evaluation processes to demonstrate the impact long-term.

On May 24th, Julie Cousler Emig provided testimony to the House Education and Human Services Committees’ Joint Hearing, “Mental Health Services Provided to Pennsylvania’s Secondary Students” emphasizing mental and emotional health is a great concern for the commonwealth’s youth as they emerge from the height of the pandemic.

June 2021

We doubled down on our request to the General Assembly and requested that \$2.85 million be appropriated in the FY 2022-2023 budget for a pilot program to expand the behavioral health services in each of Pennsylvania’s 26 SBHCs. The addition of a behavioral health counselor to join the SBHCs’ community health workers and support for the nurse practitioner or other medical provider would have better served children and adolescents identified with mental health and substance use risk.

September 2021

Since the final budget did not include the \$2.85 million investment in expanded mental health services in Pennsylvania’s 26 SBHCs, we turned our attention to the Senate Democratic Caucus. We contacted each of the 21 democratic senators with the request that they urge Senator Hughes, democratic chair of the Appropriations Committee, to include in the next appropriations agreement \$2.85 million to support the work of SBHCs across the Commonwealth. While we understood that it would be an uphill battle for the full senate, we thought having the caucus support the proposal would be a strong signal that funding SBHCs is necessary for our students’ mental health.

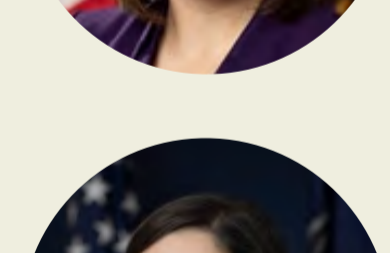
The Senators who expressed their support to Senator Hughes included:



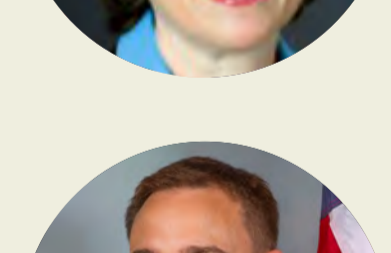
Senator Lindsey M. Williams



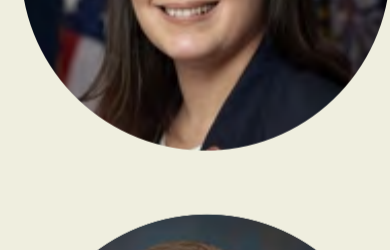
Senator Schwank



Senator Cappelletti



Senator Sabatina



Senator Kane



Senator Street



Senator Collett



Senator Comitta



Senator Tartaglione



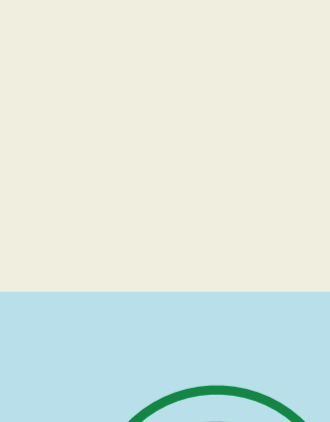
Senator Haywood

Please reach out to our allies and thank them for their commitment.

October 2021

On the national front, the Senate’s Labor Health and Human Services Appropriations Subcommittee released their FY22 bill and it included a \$60 million allocation for SBHCs and FQHC SBHCs! In September, the House included \$50 million in their budget, so the Senate budget is a \$10 million increase. This is the first time that both houses of Congress included funding for SBHCs. As of publication, President Biden signed a Continuing Resolution to keep the government funded until February 18th 2022. Hopefully, this Continuing Resolution will allow both parties the time to reach a deal on a package of appropriations bills that have been caught up in negotiations for months, including funding for SBHCs.

In the Spotlight



PA has a new SBHC coming on board. Kudos to Sadler Health Center and West Perry School District in Perry County who have teamed up to bring oral health care to the students for years and now will launch a full service SBHC in 2022. We happily await the ribbon cutting.

The PSBHA surveyed eight SBHC operators across PA this summer to learn the current scope of their services and the reimbursement models and care metrics for sustainability and impact in Pennsylvania’s most vulnerable communities. In 2022 we will team up with the Medicaid plans to share the scope and impact to envision a new and coordinated framework to advance pediatric and adolescent health and educational equity. We look forward to deepening this partnership and measuring our impact in 2022 and beyond.