

GOVERNORS EMERITI

COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA

The Honorable
GEORGE M. LEADER
Governor of Pennsylvania
1955-1959

The Honorable
DICK THORNBURGH
Governor of Pennsylvania
1979-1987

The Honorable
TOM RIDGE
Governor of Pennsylvania
1995-2001

The Honorable
MARK SCHWEIKER
Governor of Pennsylvania
2001-2003

The Honorable
ED RENDELL
Governor of Pennsylvania
2003-2011

Words matter. Names matter. Stigma lasts.

These should be reasons enough for Pennsylvania to change the name of the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare. If providing “welfare” to “welfare” recipients is what the Department actually did, then the name might make sense. But the fact is that 95% of what the Department of Public Welfare does and who they serve are human(s) in need of service(s).

We are pleased to join together as former Governors of our great commonwealth in asking the legislature to change the name of the Department of Public Welfare to the Department of Human Services. We support the legislative efforts of Representative Tom Murt and Senators Bob Mensch and Jay Costa that would make this change at no cost to taxpayers.

Pennsylvanians who are served by the Department are our mothers and grandmothers in need of long-term nursing care. They are our neighbors struggling with mental illness, children with physical disabilities, and family members with a terrible drug addiction. And sadly, they are the mothers next door, where something not right, needing the protection and help of a shelter. These are not welfare recipients. Again, they are humans in need of services.

And while we like being the only state in some things, we should not want to be the only state in all things -- like being the only state to still have a Department of Public Welfare. According to American Public Human Service Administrators, every other state has ceased calling the Department that provides services to human beings “Welfare.” Except Pennsylvania. Here in Pennsylvania, the commonwealth partners with county governments in the delivery of human services and not one of our 67 counties has an agency or department of “Welfare.”

We hope you will support our request and change the name of the Department of Public Welfare to the Department of Human Services.



George Leader
Richard Thornburgh
Tom Ridge
Mark Schweiker
Ed Rendell