

**MAUREE A. GINGRICH, MEMBER
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House of Representatives
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Harrisburg

COMMITTEES

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CARE & SERVICES
SUBCOMMITTEE CHAIR
LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION
RULES

June 11, 2015

Governor Tom Wolf
225 Main Capitol Building
Harrisburg, PA. 17120

Governor Wolf:

Earlier this week, I was disappointed to learn of a piece of correspondence which was sent by the Department of Labor and Industry to the Pennsylvania Association for the Blind (PAB), and presumably to other organizations which provide vocational rehabilitation services to the citizens of our Commonwealth.

The aforementioned letter, dated June 3, contained an ominous warning that state funding for vocational rehabilitation services will no longer be made available to organizations like PAB if the 2015-16 Commonwealth Budget is not passed and signed by July 1, 2015. Furthermore, the letter explicitly stated that vocational rehabilitation services rendered after that date would not be paid for in the event of a budgetary impasse.

Not only would this ***unprecedented action*** serve to jeopardize the employment of service providers throughout our state, it also would endanger thousands of disabled Pennsylvanians who rely on PAB and similar organizations to help them develop critical life and professional skills, and achieve the dignity and independence that comes from gainful employment.

What I find equally troubling is the letter's thinly-veiled attempt to leverage funding for these essential services for a timely state budget. For the last four years, the legislative and executive branches have worked tirelessly to deliver on-time, fiscally responsible budgets. We have done so without resorting to latent threats or politicizing programs which serve at-risk demographics.

The members of the General Assembly would not pass a budget which only partially funds these needed programs. They will be fully funded, and I am shocked you would support anything less.

As we progress in this year's budget cycle, and frankly, the next three as well, I would implore you and the rest of your administration to cease this type of political gamesmanship and focus on

delivering budgets that are fair, balanced and respectful to Pennsylvania taxpayers – including those with physical and cognitive disabilities.

Finally governor, you need to ask, are these types of actions really “government that works – one worthy of our trust?”

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Maureen A. Gingrich". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping 'M' and a distinct 'A'.

Representative Maureen Gingrich
Pennsylvania House of Representatives, 101st Legislative District
Chair, House Labor and Industry Committee

CC: Kathy Manderino, Secretary of the Department of Labor and Industry

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June 3, 2015

Ms. Elaine R. Welch, President/CEO
PA Association f/t Blind
555 Gettysburg Pike, Suite A300
Mechanicsburg, PA 17055-2020

Dear Ms. Welch:

As you know, Governor Wolf and the Legislature are working on a budget. Although we do not anticipate a delay in the budget being passed, if it is not passed by July 1, 2015, there will be no funds available to continue state-funded projects and programs until the time that the budget is passed. As such, organizations with limited funding sources should make contingency plans in the event there is a delay. Services provided without the benefit of available funding (a passed and signed budget) cannot be paid for retroactively.

If you have any questions regarding this information, please contact me at 717-787-1112 or by email at lpletz@pa.gov.

Sincerely,



Lisa Pletz, M.P.A., Program Analyst
Contractor and Grantee Services Division

LP:jbl
cc: File