

NEWS RELEASE April 10, 2012
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**Share Your Story About the Impact of Proposed State Cuts to
Programs for People with Disabilities**

GREENSBURG (April 10, 2012) – Westmoreland County Commissioner Ted Kopas today invited county residents to share their stories about the impacts of proposed state budget cuts to programs that serve people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and behavioral health diagnoses. Stories will be shared with state legislators who are now considering the state's next budget that will begin July 1, 2012.

Governor Tom Corbett's proposed budget calls for a 20 percent cut in funding for these human service programs. In Westmoreland County alone the Governor's proposal means a cut of at least \$3 million to serve this vulnerable population.

"These vital, and often life-sustaining services, are about names not just numbers. This is not a faceless, nameless budget line item. It's about real people whose well-being is being put into jeopardy," Commissioner Kopas said. "We need to help our state leaders better understand what these cuts will mean to our families, our neighbors and our communities."

Services set to be drastically cut under the current state budget proposal include helping children, youth and adults with serious mental illness, people with intellectual disabilities, people who are homeless or facing eviction, people managing substance addiction, and more. In addition, a proposal is being advanced in Harrisburg that would force families to pay medical co-payments if they have a disability.

"Now is the time for county residents to speak out," Commissioner Kopas said. "We need to share our stories about what the affects will be. These drastic cuts will not only impact those who directly receive services, but also their families and caregivers, schools, and those who do not yet know that they need services.

"These cuts target programs that were under-funded to begin with. In Westmoreland County, hundreds of people with developmental disabilities are on a waiting list – being denied vital services – because of budget decisions.

"Only the voices of the people can prevent this tragedy from getting worse."

Those interested can share their stories via e-mail to tkopas@co.westmoreland.pa.us or by U.S. mail to Commissioner Ted Kopas, 2 North Main Street, Suite 101, Greensburg, PA 15601. Only first names and municipality are necessary. Complete anonymity will be honored upon request.