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Bradford County Commissioners Office

Statement on Closing the South Towanda Day Care Facility

As promised at the outset of this year the Bradford County Commissioners' Office has engaged in an in depth study of the Bradford County Daycare operation. The goal of the study was to gain a greater understanding of the operation in regards to both the current, historical and future financial implications of running the program. It was another important aspect of the study to look at the current child care needs of the county especially in the local areas our daycares are currently serving. Furthermore, options for the future operation of the program have been studied. We have been engaged in many months of research, analysis, and we reviewed different restructuring models.

The facts and numbers gathered throughout our efforts are final and accurate. They have been checked, double checked and checked again. As commissioners we have met weekly with the human services director discussing all the various aspects of this and receiving information that he has gathered over the course of many months. We have met with the independent auditors in Williamsport to discuss the financial history, current financial condition and the future financial implications of the program.

The study has revealed some very serious facts regarding the financial condition of the daycare operation as a whole. After careful study and verification with the county's independent auditors Bradford County has, for many years, been carrying forward the debt of the daycare year after year. This has happened because the daycare has continually lost more than it was budgeted to lose and in some years those losses were not made whole and instead they were carried forward into the next year as a debt.

This has created a situation that has placed significant burden on the taxpayers' general fund over the years. In fact in 2007 the county transferred over \$592,000 to the daycare from the taxpayers' general fund to keep the program financially viable.

Additionally, the all but certain future state funding cuts the county will receive this summer as well as the current financial climate has made a decision to remedy any financial issues more than a necessity at this point. It is apparent and unfortunate that budget proposals at the state level will have a negative effect on local property taxpayers.

After all the research it is apparent that there is no way to make the program as a whole financially viable without some hard decisions that will require severe inconveniences for parents and even more severe hardships for some Bradford County employees.

After careful study it is necessary to close the South Towanda daycare facility effective July 3, 2009. This center is expected to lose nearly \$90,000 in 2009 alone. It has been

determined there is little that can be done to manage the current and future deficit considering the staffing required, the building it is in and the payer mix of this particular facility. Enrollment has been in decline for a number of years; however operational costs continue to rise. The facility is licensed at a capacity of 81 however it currently serves 54 participants. There are nine full time and eleven part time staff members who will be laid-off at the time of the closing.

The Bradford County Child Care Information System has confirmed there are openings in licensed day care centers in the local area to be able to accommodate many of the children currently served by the facility. Bradford County Human Services will be directed to assist parents in every way possible in the transition from the Towanda Day Care Center to their new child care providers.

In regards to the other facilities operated by Bradford County which include the Athens School age program, the Sayre Day Care Center, Towanda School Age Program they will continue to operate as normal as they are capable of collectively breaking even.

As a commissioner I have been involved in many tough decisions, all of which pale in comparison to this decision. Not one decision or situation has stirred as many of my own emotions as this. People should know that this is not easy for anyone involved in this process. I would like to apologize in advance to the inconveniences those parents and their children will go through. Also to those employees whom will be laid off, I offer my sincerest apologies and best wishes.