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STATE SENATOR  
**LINDSEY M. WILLIAMS**

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Senate of Pennsylvania

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March 10, 2022

Senator Jay Costa  
Democratic Leader  
Room: 535 Main Capitol  
Senate Box 203043  
Harrisburg, PA 17120-3043

Senator Vincent Hughes  
Minority Chairman, Appropriations Committee  
Room: 545 Main Capitol  
Senate Box 203007  
Harrisburg, PA 17120-3007

Dear Leader Costa and Chairman Hughes,

I respectfully request your support to maintain the full \$750,000 line item for the New Choices / New Options program in the 2022/2023 Labor and Industry budget. Governor Tom Wolf included this funding in the Administration's budget proposal. I also request your support to increase the New Choices / New Options line item up to a total of \$1 million.

As the effects of the pandemic continue to linger and affect women more acutely, Pennsylvania Women Work's services are more in-demand than ever. Last year, PA Women Work saw a 22% increase in demand for the New Choices / New Options program over the prior year. This is a direct result from the surge in unemployment, particularly among PA Women Work's target population of women, minorities, justice-involved individuals, and mature workers who were expected to be nearing retirement. PA Women Work has grown to serve 48 counties in Pennsylvania and continues to develop new partnerships to enable more growth.

As the Legislature prioritizes workforce development, it is vital that we invest in programs that have a proven track record of success. This worthy program has maintained a 3-to-1 return on state investment for 29 years and has helped nearly 70,000 Pennsylvanians find lasting employment. Through the New Choices / New Options program, clients receive intensive services to resolve their obstacles to employment and find lasting jobs that pay a family-sustaining wage. In this life-changing program, participants gain the tools and self-esteem needed to create a path to achieving their professional goals of either obtaining employment or continuing their education.

For nearly three decades, New Choices / New Options has turned recipients of state benefits into Pennsylvania taxpayers and has improved the economic health and quality of life in our Commonwealth. Clients find living-wage jobs that give them the power to break the cycle of generational poverty and find stability for themselves and their families. Upon entry, 82% of clients are at or below the 200% of the federal poverty level. At intake, clients have an average annual household income of \$20,438, but after New Choices, participants earn an average annual income of \$32,716.

In 2020/2021, this program delivered successful outcomes and savings for the state. Graduates' average starting wage in their new employment was close to \$16 per hour. Considering added tax revenue, Medicaid savings and more, New Choices provides the state approximately \$1.5 million in savings.

New Choices / New Options is needed now more than ever. I urge you to support a 2022/2023 budget that includes the full investment into New Choices/New Options so that the program is funded at its full \$750,000 level and consider an increase in funding.

If you have any follow up questions, please do not hesitate to reach out: [Lindsey.Williams@PASenate.com](mailto:Lindsey.Williams@PASenate.com) | 412-364-0469.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lindsey M. Williams".

Lindsey M. Williams  
38<sup>th</sup> Senatorial District