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## **Human Services Secretary Reminds Pennsylvanians Experiencing Domestic Violence that Help and Support are Available**

**Harrisburg, PA** – Department of Human Services (DHS) Secretary Teresa Miller today joined Susan Higginbotham, Chief Executive Officer of the Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence (PCADV) and Lori Sywensky, Executive Director of Turning Point of Lehigh Valley, to mark Domestic Violence Awareness Month, observed every October, by detailing the resources available to survivors and people experiencing domestic violence. The panel also discussed the signs and types of domestic abuse, which survivors may be experiencing in new or more frequent ways as the COVID-19 pandemic requires people to spend more time in their homes.

“Everyone should live free of violence and mistreatment, especially in our close, trusted relationships. If you are experiencing emotional or financial abuse or physical violence from a relative or partner, please know that you are not alone in this, and help is available to keep you and your family safe,” said Secretary Miller. “While we mark Domestic Violence Awareness Month every October, the work of preventing domestic violence never stops. We are proud to partner with PCADV as they support survivors through unimaginable obstacles to build a safe, supportive environment and achieve a better life. We must always create a safe, supportive environment where all affected by domestic violence know that they are not alone. If you fear for a friend, peer, or loved one’s health or safety – talk with them. A small action can save a life.”

Domestic violence is a pattern of behaviors by a partner to maintain power and control over another partner in an intimate relationship. Domestic violence may involve emotional or verbal abuse, financial abuse, physical violence, sexual violence, or stalking, either individually or in combination.

One in four women and one in seven men experience intimate partner violence in their lifetime, and domestic violence can affect any age, race, gender, or socio-economic status. In 2019, 112 women, men, and children lost their lives from domestic violence in Pennsylvania.

Anyone can help protect themselves as well as their family, friends, neighbors, and peers who may be experiencing abuse by understanding the signs of domestic violence and making a referral to a local domestic violence program. Name-calling and demeaning comments, frequent phone calls and texts, casting blame and refusing to take responsibility, isolating the person from their family and friends, expressing intense emotions very quickly, and restricting access to financial resources are common signs of abuse. Additionally, warning signs of a potential abusive relationship can be constant fear of their partner’s reaction, making excuses for their partner’s behavior, a partner displaying jealousy or possessiveness, unexplained injuries, isolation, and changes in

behavior or personality. These may be signs that something is wrong. More information on signs of abuse can be found [here](#).

PCADV works in all 67 counties of the commonwealth to support domestic violence survivors, give victims the tools they need to leave, overcome harmful situations, and train advocates to understand and identify signs of domestic violence to broaden the network of support for survivors.

“Domestic Violence Awareness Month is a powerful reminder that even in a global pandemic, domestic violence doesn’t stop and neither do the services we provide to survivors and their families. Our 59 local domestic violence programs have swiftly evolved how they provide a breadth of services so that even in the most challenging times, survivors can find a path to safety,” said PCADV CEO Susan Higginbotham.

The current public health crisis has people at home more regularly, and for some people, home is not always a safe environment. If you or someone you care for are experiencing domestic violence, help is available. For anonymous, confidential help available 24/7, call the National Domestic Violence Helpline 1-800-799-SAFE (7233) or text LOVEIS to 22522.

For more information about signs of abuse, how to support survivors, and PCADV, visit [www.pcadv.org](http://www.pcadv.org).