



Controller Mark Pinsley Calls on County Commissioners to Hire Outside Investigators to Look into Cover-up of Misdiagnosis Report

(Allentown, PA, February 22, 2024)- Lehigh County Controller Mark Pinsley is calling on County Commissioners to hire an outside investigator to evaluate the extent of potential intimidation of his office to cover up an explosive audit released by his office.

"Normally, my office investigates issues that carry potential ethical concerns, but seeing that my office is the one that I believe was recently the victim of an effort to intimidate and conceal the findings of my audit report, *The Cost of Misdiagnosis*, the county must bring in neutral, third-party investigators to conduct a thorough investigation," said Controller Pinsley.

Pinsley alleges that his report, *The Cost of Misdiagnosis*, which revealed chronic over diagnosing of child abuse and unduly separating families, resulted in efforts by the county to undermine his office and attempt to prevent the release of his report.

Shortly before releasing his report, Pinsley learned that his office had two of its staff positions cut, seemingly to send a message. That would have been a 25% reduction in staff. In addition, the Solicitor's Office routinely informed him that he and the staff could be held personally and financially liable. After what he believed were threats, Pinsley made the administration aware that he halted his press conference and the release of his report. The next day, he was notified that the positions were restored to his budget. Once the budget physically went to print and Pinsley knew the staff was secure, Pinsley announced his findings and released the report.

"I believe that the county administration under Executive Phillips Armstrong, with the compliance of the Board of Commissioners under the leadership of Chairman Geoff Brace and Vice Chairman Jeff Dutt, wanted to intimidate an independent row office and threaten the financial well-being of my employees to protect a powerful hospital network and the government itself for turning their back on clear wrongdoing," said Controller Pinsley.





Pinsley wants the commissioners to hire an independent third-party investigator like Allentown's current investigation into allegations that the city administration failed to respond to the concerns of their employees sufficiently. He also wants the commissioners to ensure that the investigator has subpoena power to provide the ability to collect necessary evidence. The independent Commission should answer some of the following questions.

1. How long was management aware of the doctor's history, and how did they ensure our citizens were protected against misdiagnosis?
2. Was there an effort by the administration or the board to stop the Cost of Misdiagnosis Report from being delivered to the public?
3. Did Executive Phil Armstrong remove two positions from the budget only to restore them after Mr. Pinsley said he would not be issuing the report?
4. Did the solicitor's office assign the lead solicitor of Children And Youth to be the solicitor for the Controller's office, and did this represent a conflict of interest?
5. Did Executive Armstrong, Commissioner Brace, and Commissioner Dutt engage in activities that would constitute a breach of 18 U.S.C. § 610 (Coercion of Political Activity) if they did, in fact, try to stop the report from being provided to the public?
6. Does the administration know the actual status of the doctor involved in this potential misdiagnosis?

"We must understand why the prior board failed to take any action after more than 15 families and more than 170 people attended a board meeting asking for assistance. There are now more than 150 families that claim to be victims of misdiagnosis. There has been no effort by the administration to validate these claims. There has been no effort to speak with SIEU (the case worker union). There has been no effort to make sure that the county systems do not allow this to happen again. I have waited to bring this public until the new board was seated so they might have a fresh perspective on this issue. If the board wants to get to the bottom of this and have nothing to hide, they should have nothing to fear from an investigation. I'm calling on this board to act now and protect future families from this danger," said Pinsley.





Lehigh County Pennsylvania

OFFICE OF THE CONTROLLER

Mark Pinsley, MBA

COUNTY CONTROLLER

Nanton John, CFE

DEPUTY CONTROLLER

Richard Wexler, Executive Director of the National Coalition for Child Protection Reform, who has followed Lehigh County's lack of action closely, had the following to add:

"When questions were raised about false allegations of child abuse and needless removal of children in Philadelphia, public officials acted responsibly: The Philadelphia City Council created a Special Committee on Child Separations," said Richard Wexler, executive director of the National Coalition for Child Protection Reform, and a member of the Special Committee.

"The committee issued a comprehensive report with recommendations for the city and the state. And Philadelphia's Department of Human Services has taken significant steps toward curbing its high rate of needlessly separating families. In contrast, Lehigh County officials prefer to retreat into a bunker and take potshots at the messenger. The findings from the County Controller demand urgent action, and the allegations of intimidation and retaliation demand an independent investigation."

Since then, a significant class action lawsuit has been issued against LVHN, alleging multiple instances of well-documented wrongdoing and further demonstrating the extent to which this problem was ignored and neglected. Controller Pinsley suggested that the extent of the lawsuit only further highlights the county's negligence and its shameful inactivity.

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