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## **Physician General Partners with Agricultural Community Leaders to Highlight the Opioid Epidemic's Impact on Rural Pennsylvanians**

**Mifflintown, PA** – Today, Physician General Dr. Rachel Levine visited Weis Markets in Mifflintown, Juniata County, to discuss the opioid epidemic's effects on agricultural and rural communities and underscore the Wolf Administration's efforts in fighting this devastating public health crisis in Pennsylvania.

"The opioid epidemic affects every community in Pennsylvania, and rural areas are not immune to this crisis," said Dr. Levine. "The Wolf Administration has been working diligently to give individuals struggling with the disease of addiction hope for recovery. No matter where you live in the commonwealth, you deserve the opportunity to receive effective medical care and treatment."

Speakers for the event also included the Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Agriculture's Executive Director Hannah Smith-Brubaker and Mark Critz, Executive Director of Pennsylvania's Rural Development Council.

"Addiction isn't a city issue or a country issue – it affects us all, no matter what part of Pennsylvania you call home," said Critz. "Whether you're struggling against heroin or the side-effects of a powerful prescription painkiller, we're here to help you and your family in your community."

The Wolf Administration holds the fight against heroin and prescription opioids as a top priority. In order to continue the

battle against the opioid epidemic in Pennsylvania, Governor Wolf included the following proposals in his 2017-18 budget:

- Expanding access to life-saving naloxone by providing \$10 million through the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency to first responders, law enforcement, and other public entities across the commonwealth;
- Maximizing federal Cures Act funding, which includes \$26.2 million in each of the next two years for Pennsylvania, to expand access to treatment services, particularly for individuals who are uninsured or underinsured; and
- Providing \$3.4 million to expand evidence-based specialty drug courts to expand treatment strategies that divert offenders into more meaningful treatment and recovery.

Some of the administration's other initiatives to fight the opioid epidemic include:

- Establishing a new law limiting the amount of opioids that can be prescribed to a minor and to individuals discharged from emergency rooms to seven days;
- Strengthening the Prescription Drug Monitoring Program (PDMP) so that doctors are required and able to check the system each time they prescribe opioids and benzodiazepines;
- Forming new prescribing guidelines to help doctors, including geriatricians, who provide opioid prescriptions to their patients;
- Creating the warm handoff guideline to facilitate referrals from the emergency department to substance abuse treatment;
- Educating and encouraging seniors to properly use, store, and dispose of unused prescription medications through Drug Take-Back initiatives;
- Increasing the availability of naloxone; and
- Designating Centers of Excellence, central hubs that provide navigators to assist those with opioid use disorders with behavioral and physical health care, along with medication-assisted treatment, as needed.

If you or someone you know is suffering from the disease of addiction, call 1-800-662-HELP or visit [www.pa.gov/opioids](http://www.pa.gov/opioids) for treatment options. For more information on the fight against opioid abuse in Pennsylvania, visit the Department of Health website at [www.health.pa.gov](http://www.health.pa.gov) or follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

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