

September 9, 2021

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The Honorable Michael Doyle
United States House of Representatives
2637 East Carson Street
Pittsburgh PA 15203

Dear Representative Doyle,

We are writing to request your support of the Better Care Better Jobs Act. As advocates for Pennsylvania citizens with intellectual disabilities and autism, we have requested that Pennsylvania invest \$541 million into the fee schedule rates that support this population. This is critically needed to increase wages for Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) who provide essential care and services to 55,000 people with intellectual disabilities and autism across the Commonwealth. Pennsylvania's owned and operated State Centers pay their workers an average hourly wage of \$18.66, versus only \$14.38 for those DSPs working in Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) settings. \$541 million is needed immediately to establish pay equity and to prevent the further collapse of critical services due to the economic inability to hire and retain qualified workers.

Funding for this initial investment is available from the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021. The Better Care Better Jobs Act will ensure that this commitment can be sustained and achieve the long-term improvements to HCBS that are proposed under this legislation. Without a reliable source of funding to support their workforce, provider organizations will be forced to close programs and decrease the number of people with disabilities they can support. The only way to accomplish this is through a commitment to increase fee schedule rates to levels that are competitive with current market conditions, and that keep pace with rising costs over time.

We realize that the original proposal under the Better Care Better Jobs Act identified an investment of \$400 billion and making permanent the 10% FMAP increase, and that the ultimate funding amount is subject to change. However, we urge you to support this bill at the \$400 billion level to support fee schedule rate increases for Pennsylvania's most vulnerable citizens now and into the future. The existence of HCBS services for tens of thousands of people with disabilities depends upon this investment.

Thank you for your consideration of this request and for your ongoing support to people with disabilities across the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

Sincerely,

Patrick DeMico

Patrick DeMico, Executive Director

On behalf of,

The Provider Alliance Board of Directors:

Ruth Siegfried, President; Founder and President/CEO, InVision Human Services

Diane O'Rourke, Vice President; Chief Executive Officer, The Arc Mercer County

Will Stennett, Treasurer; Chief Officer of Dev. Disabilities & HCBS Policy, Voices for Independence

Susan Lautenbacher, Ph.D., Secretary; Chief Executive Officer, Lark Enterprises

Marisol Valentin; Executive Director, McAuley Ministries

The Provider Alliance Government and Advocacy Committee:

Gary Blumenthal, InVision Human Services

Michele Charmello, Transitional Services

Craig Douglass, The Provider Alliance and Mainstay Life Services

Nancy Murray, Achieva and The Arc of Greater Pittsburgh

David Tobiczkyk, Goodwill of Southwestern Pennsylvania

cc: Tom Wolf, Governor of Pennsylvania
Bob Casey, U.S. Senator, Pennsylvania
Pat Toomey, U.S. Senator, Pennsylvania

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