

September 10, 2021

The Honorable Tom Wolf
Governor of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
508 Main Capitol Building
Harrisburg PA 17120

Dear Governor Wolf,

In July we shared with you our comments and recommendations to the Pennsylvania Spending Plan for the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021. Now that the Commonwealth has released its revised spending proposal based upon stakeholder input, we believe this is an opportune time to update you on our efforts and new developments that have emerged since our last correspondence.

We recently collected wage and workforce data from our membership and have compared that with the current compensation paid to workers serving the Commonwealth owned and operated State Centers. The disparity in wages is significant and continues to grow each year as annual wage increases are awarded to state center employees. The next increase for state workers will occur on October 1. Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) who work in PA's communities do not receive annual wage increases.

Currently, State Center Residential Services Aides earn an average hourly wage of \$18.66. The average hourly wage for a community Direct Support Professional (DSP) is \$14.38. This is 30% less than their State Center counterparts and is not a competitive wage in the current labor market. Establishing pay equity for community DSPs requires an investment of \$541 million. This request is identical to our July recommendations. We can assure you that we are also contacting PA's Congressional delegation as their support is needed to sustain this investment going forward through the Better Care Better Jobs Act.

The attached information illustrates the stark contrast in workforce investment and summarizes the data and adverse impact to our communities. As included in our July 2 letter we continue to support funding for sign-on and retention bonuses, incentivizing the use of technologies, and expanding the proposed student loan forgiveness programs to ID/A DSPs. However, we believe that immediate relief can be funded through a retroactive adjustment to the proposed increase to fee schedule rates.

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

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 Tobiczky, Goodwill of Southwestern Pennsylvania

cc: Elena Cross, Chief of Staff
Meg Snead, Secretary, Department of Human Services
Kristin Ahrens, Deputy Secretary, DHS, Office of Developmental Programs