

October 7, 2021

Pennsylvania General Assembly
Pennsylvania State Capitol
501 N. 3rd Street
Harrisburg PA 17120

Subject: American Rescue Plan – Equal Pay for Equal Work

Dear Members of the Pennsylvania General Assembly,

The Provider Alliance, representing over 100 organizations and tens of thousands of people with disabilities and their caregivers, has steadfastly supported investment of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) dollars into the fee schedule rates that fund services for people with Intellectual Disabilities and Autism (ID/A). The current pay gap between Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) providing care in the community system and workers at the PA owned and operated ID/A State Centers is \$4.28 per hour. State Center workers are receiving pay increases effective October 1, which will further widen this gap as it does every year that fee schedule rates for the community system are not updated to capture cost of living increases.

A total annual investment of \$541 million has been requested to establish Equal Pay for Equal Work with our colleagues providing care in the state system. At current federal matching levels under ARPA, the state share of this figure is \$171 million. While our request will have ongoing impact to the state budget going forward, the Commonwealth is obligated under Pennsylvania regulation to update fee schedule rates using a market-based approach by October 2022. **The availability of additional federal matching funds under ARPA will enable the state to fully cover the prorated cost of a fee schedule increase in this fiscal year. The availability of enhanced federal match in subsequent years will continue to substantially offset the financial obligation of the state.**

Currently, the community ID/A system is collapsing. Service capacity is decreasing due to a lack of qualified DSPs to provide care. Over 6,500 people have lost services and cannot return due to an underfunded DSP workforce. Provider organizations, self-advocates, and families seeking DSPs must compete with other industries capable of adjusting wages as needed to attract and retain workers. The community ID/A system is reliant upon funding through the ID/A fee schedule exclusively, and no funding can be generated if services cannot be provided.



*The Provider Alliance
2216 Longview Drive
Greensburg PA 15601
www.provideralliance.org
Tel: 724.757.7157*

Our advocacy further includes efforts to influence federal appropriations to the Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) system through the legislation proposed under the Better Care for Better Jobs Act. We are at a crucial point where it is absolutely essential to address the ID/A community workforce shortage to ensure that services do not remain in jeopardy for every Pennsylvanian with a disability. Your support for Equal Pay for Equal Work is respectfully requested, and your consideration of this critical issue is greatly appreciated.

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: Tom Wolf, Governor, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Meg Snead, Acting Secretary, Department of Human Services
Kristin Ahrens, Deputy Secretary, Office of Developmental Programs

