

Dear Chairperson _____,

On behalf of the families, individuals, and providers in my district, I am writing in support of an additional \$430 million in state general funds (to be matched by the federal government under the HCBS Medicaid program) into the FY 2023-24 budget under the Intellectual Disabilities -Community Waiver Program. These funds are urgently needed to increase Direct Support Professional (DSP) wages to serve our most vulnerable citizens.

Our concerns include:

- A depleted workforce that does not have the capacity to serve the 61,000 people authorized to receive intellectual disability services, while another 12,400 people remain on the state's waiting list.
- A below-market and noncompetitive average hourly wage of \$16.72 resulting in 24% of all positions being vacant, a 37% annual turnover rate among DSPs, and life-threatening decreases in system capacity.
- The disproportionate economic impact on people with disabilities, and the workforce that supports them, the majority of which is comprised by female and minority workers.
- The financial, economic, social, and mental health impact on individuals and families that cannot rely upon the current community system and must suffer the consequences of underinvestment each and every day.

The failure to fulfill our duty to our most vulnerable citizens has serious consequences and is creating daily crises for thousands of Pennsylvania families including elderly parents who after decades of providing care can no longer care for their adult children. And there are single caregivers across the state who are losing their jobs and homes in order to care for their adult children due to the shortage of DSPs.

Pennsylvania once had a nationally recognized community service system for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities; however, without a sufficient and equitably compensated workforce, providers are no longer able to offer desperately needed services. People who are eligible for services through the Office of Developmental Programs have life long, medically and behaviorally complex support needs that require qualified and highly trained DSPs. Without the DSP workforce, more providers will be forced to stop offering critical services and the system will continue to collapse leaving tens of thousands of Pennsylvanians without services.

In order to stop this crisis from escalating, we support the inclusion of an additional \$430 million in the 2023-2024 General Fund Budget.

Signed,