



January 26, 2023

The Honorable Josh Shapiro
Governor
Room 225 Main Capitol Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Dear Governor Shapiro:

As the organizations representing Pennsylvania's Intellectual Disabilities/Autism (ID/A) service providers, we are asking you to include \$430 million in your 2023-2024 state general fund budget proposal to significantly improve the wage rates for the Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) who provide care to individuals with ID/A. This funding, along with its federal match, is crucial because the ID/A system is in crisis. Nearly 60,000 Pennsylvanians with ID/A are at risk of losing or experiencing a reduction of essential services because there are not enough DSPs to care for them. More specifically:

- After years of underfunding, the most recent rate increase did not provide enough of an increase to keep providers competitive with current the job market. Providers of intellectual disability and autism (ID/A) services continue to constantly struggle to recruit and retain a sufficient number of Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) to care for people with ID/A.
- Underinvestment in community services has resulted in reduced capacity and has placed tremendous strain on individuals, families, and ID/A providers who are unable to offer competitive wages to retain and attract DSPs. Further, low wages, high turnover, and the economic impact of DSP underinvestment disproportionately affects female and minority workers, as they comprise the majority of the DSP workforce.
- People who lost their services during the pandemic, particularly those in day or employment programs, continue to go without services and are being cared for by parents or other family caregivers. As a result, we have heard from many families who must provide 24/7 care for their adult children, many of whom have significant medical and/or behavioral issues. This includes elderly parents who are physically or emotionally unable to provide this care without risking their own health and safety. Finally, a growing number of family caregivers are quitting their jobs to provide care and are losing their homes, health care, and retirement savings. Families have become the safety net, and this is not sustainable.

- Pennsylvanians with complex needs and multiple diagnoses are at even greater risk due to the DSP shortage. DSPs who support them require greater training and operate in a higher risk environment.
- More than 12,000 people remain on the Pennsylvania waiting list for ID/A services. Of these individuals 5,400 individuals are categorized as Emergency Need, indicating they are at risk and require services immediately.
- ID/A is funded through a single-payer system with Medicaid dollars administered by the Commonwealth. There are no additional resources available to support community ID/A services.

Investing \$430 million in 2023-2024 state general funds (with its federal match) to increase rates for DSP wages will address provider concerns with inflation and other market-based cost indicators. More importantly, it will relieve the tremendous strain being placed on families who can't get the services they need and will enable ID/A providers to offer competitive wages to retain and attract DSPs.

In addition, we urge your support to preserve the Home and Community Based Services for Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities Augmentation Account established in the 2022-2023 Fiscal Code. This Account ensures funds committed to Pennsylvania's remaining state centers (currently \$132.5 million in state funds), and any proceeds from their liquidation, stay in the community ID/A system.

In closing, we are asking for the opportunity to meet with you at your earliest possible convenience to further discuss this 2023-2024 appropriations request. We will coordinate availability on our end and will accommodate your schedule the best we can.

Thank you for considering our ask. We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Alliance of Community Service Providers
The Arc of Pennsylvania
Max Association
Pennsylvania Advocacy and Resources for Autism and Intellectual Disability
The Provider Alliance
Rehabilitation and Community Providers Association

cc: Dana Fritz, Chief of Staff
Lindsey Mauldin, Deputy Chief of Staff
The Honorable Uri Monson, Secretary of the Budget
The Honorable Akbar Hossain, Secretary of Policy and Planning
The Honorable Mike Vereb, Secretary of Legislative Affairs
The Honorable Valerie Arkoosh, Secretary, Department of Human Services