



October 7, 2022

Director Maureen Corcoran
Ohio Department of Medicaid
50 West Town Street
Columbus, Ohio 43215

Director Ursel McElroy
Ohio Department of Aging
246 N. High Street, 1st Floor
Columbus, OH 43215

Director Kimberly Hauck
Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities
30 E Broad Street
Columbus, Ohio 43215

Re: 2024-2025 State Budget

Dear Directors:

Over the past year, the Ohio Olmstead Task Force (OOTF) has sought to raise awareness of the current direct care worker shortage in Ohio. As we have shared, this crisis has put the ability of people with disabilities and older Ohioans to remain independent in our homes – to have access to our community, jobs, volunteer opportunities and hobbies, dignity and independence – at risk.

The crisis is affecting people with disabilities and older adults across agencies and across Ohio. 54.43% of respondents to a recent Ohio survey marked that there is high turn-over in the in-home provider workforce and their in-home providers change often; 40.51% stated that in-home providers are unreliable and don't show up for their shifts; and 29.11% stated that they are sometimes left without in-home providers for weeks at a time.¹

We know that your departments are drafting proposed budgets that will be submitted to our General Assembly and the Governor's Office for this biennium. On behalf of our Task Force, we ask that you include the following provisions in your proposed budget:

- A provision setting a base wage for Direct Care Workers – a provision ensuring that Ohio Direct Care Workers receive a minimum hourly rate of pay for the provision of Home and Community Based Services in the Medicaid and Aging waivers;

¹ The Ability Center of Greater Toledo, Ohio Statewide Disability Needs, Survey Report (2022).



- That the Base wage for Direct Care Workers be set at \$20/hour. This amount is consistent with what has been requested by others for DODD Waivers and ODA Waivers in this budget cycle. The base wage must be a livable wage that is consistent with other Ohio HCBS Waivers;
- Re-evaluate the current base wage for HCBS Waiver nursing services to ensure that they are competitive with what is currently being offered to other nursing professionals;
- Finally, a method for providers with Direct Care Workers to attest to the state that all workers receive, at minimum, the base wage. Attached to this letter is a rule from the state of Colorado setting out just such an accountability method.

Low wages and a lack of affordable benefits are universally identified by agencies, Direct Care Workers, and people with disabilities and older adults as the most significant issue causing direct care turnover.² The worker shortage cannot be solved without raising Direct Care Worker wages to a livable wage, and until the shortage is solved, people with disabilities and older adults in Ohio will struggle to remain independent. To raise wages, we need your help.

Please direct any questions regarding this ask to the undersigned on behalf of The Ohio Olmstead Task Force.

Sincerely,

Katie Shelley, Renee Wood
Co-Chairs of the Ohio Olmstead Task Force
Kshell621@gmail.com, babydoes8@aol.com

Jennifer Kucera
Chair of the OOTF Direct Care Crisis Work Group
Jenniferkucera134@gmail.com

² Ohio Alliance of Direct Support Professionals, *Stabilization and Beyond, Ohio's Workforce: A Call to Action*, Direct Support Professional Focus, 4 (2021).