

**Testimony on House Bill 166
State Biennium Budget
Lisa Sowers,
Constance Care Home Healthcare
April 11, 2019**



Chairman Romanchuk, Ranking Member West, and Members of the House Finance Subcommittee on Health and Human Services, thank you for allowing me to provide testimony today on HB166—the state budget. My name is Lisa Sowers and I am the H.R. Manager/Office Manager at Constance Care Home Healthcare in Circleville, Ohio. I come before you today asking for your assistance to stabilize skilled home health Medicaid rates, which are nearing a crisis because they are so low.

Skilled home health rates are the same today as they were in 1998. The lack of investment in this area has created critical access issues for some services and has left many patients forced to seek more expensive care in nursing homes or hospitals. With Medicare expenditures three times higher than Medicaid, and with expensive new regulatory requirements such as EVV, my agency's ability to continue to provide Medicaid services is now in jeopardy.

Constance Care Home Healthcare provides Skilled Nursing Services, Private Duty Nursing Services, in home Physical, Occupational & Speech Therapy and Home Health Aide/Homemaker Services. We have offices in Pickaway & Fayette counties and also serve our surrounding counties with the vast majority being of Medicaid population.

Two of the biggest issues that are a concern of ours: 1.) No rate increases since 1998. It is making it harder for recruiting and retention of employees. 2.) EVV and other regulatory cost like managed care. We are required to meet all of the regulations on the same pay since 1998 and Managed Care plans are keeping 10% of the fee for service rate for every claim that we submit.

In 2013-2014 My new hires for the year were anywhere from 50-60 employees and from January – March 2019 I have been able to hire 1 new RN. Our Home Health Aide staff has decreased from a total of 120 in 2015 to a total of 29 Home Health Aides currently because we can only pay them \$10.00 per hour. (With us they have wear and tear on their cars, gas expense). They are leaving this field and going to work at Amazon, McDonalds, Walmart, Aldi, Target, Nationwide Children's Hospital where they are making anywhere from \$11.00 - \$15.00 per hour. We have Case managers from all payer sources and even calls for private care and we just don't have the staff for coverage.

The EVV is consuming additional staff hours than before because of training field staff employees and then verifying the visits to match up with our payroll/billing systems and taking care of all exceptions before billing can be completed. With the Managed Medicaid programs are making it difficult to provide patient care as we have a 10-14 day waiting period to even get authorizations to see the patients. If a patient chooses/or Medicaid switches Managed Care programs we are not notified timely therefore they will not backdate authorizations so we have a struggle collecting what they do owe us. In 2017 we had a \$101,425.54 bad debt write off from Managed Care that we were unable to collect from Molina & Aetna.

On April 2, 2019 During Advocacy Day at the Statehouse I know that Marisa Weisel, Deputy Director for Strategic Initiatives with Ohio Department of Medicaid stated that she was hoping to see a 68% increase in home care for Medicaid population over the next year and I don't see that happening with the current rates. It is going to cost the State more money in the long run keeping people institutionalized or having to institutionalize people because they cannot find care for them at home.

We cannot continue to provide Medicaid services if the State of Ohio is not willing to support reimbursement rates that cover the costs of providing care. This is not something that we take likely, but when Medicare pays three-times more for the same services and the number of Medicare recipients is growing, it's a simple economic decision.

It's for these reasons that I humbly ask for your help with increasing the home health Medicaid rates in this budget. Thank you again for allowing me to testify today. I'm happy to answer any questions you may have at this time. Thank you.