



**The Ohio Home and Community-Based Services Coalition
Interested Party Testimony on House Bill 110
House Finance Committee
March 11, 2021**

Chairman Oelslager, Vice Chair Plummer, Ranking Member Crawley, and members of the House Finance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide written-only, interested party testimony in consideration of House Bill 110 (HB 110)—the state’s biennial budget. The Ohio Home and Community-Based Services Coalition (Ohio HCBS Coalition) is a group of over 100 advocacy organizations, individual providers, and self-advocates with the mission to protect and expand home and community-based services (HCBS) in Ohio.

The HCBS system is a comprehensive network of community providers and agencies that make it possible for Ohioans to receive services and supports at home. Despite an overwhelming desire to remain in or transition to community-living, a number of issues make this goal unattainable for many. This testimony will highlight one key priority that will bolster the current HCBS system, allowing older adults, people with disabilities, and medically complex individuals to receive care from the comfort of their home:

Increase wages for home care providers: Increase reimbursement rates and wages for providers across all systems while providing additional funding for providers to procure PPE and offset costs incurred during the pandemic.

Supporting increased wages for providers would have immeasurable impact on the lives of Ohioans. From birth through end of life, the HCBS system allows us to receive quality services without ever leaving their community.

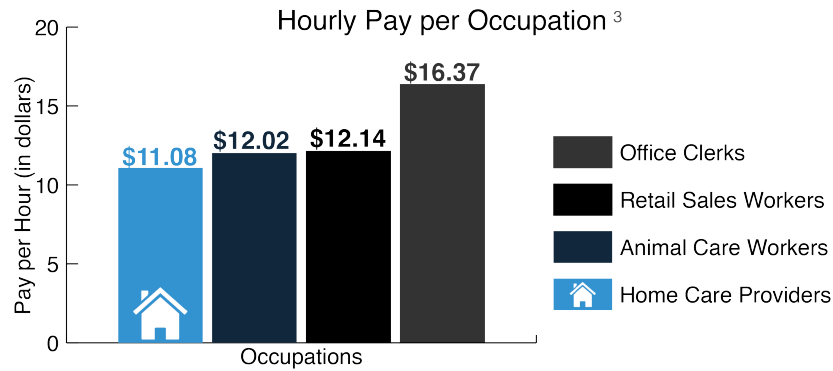
The HCBS system is facing a provider crisis—providers simply cannot afford to remain in the system, much less expand their capacity. Home care providers complete essential care for older Ohioans and people with disabilities, including help with daily activities like cooking, showering, aiding with medical needs, and accessing community resources. These providers are a critical piece of the HCBS system, and without them, many Ohioans would be forced into a costly institution—like a nursing home or Institutional Care Facility (ICF). With providers in short supply, institutionalization is a reality for many Ohioans.

Issues with provider recruitment and retention contribute substantially to the provider crisis: providers cannot afford to remain in the profession, and often live in near-poverty. In fact, the median pay for home care providers was \$11.08 per hour in 2019. That’s just over \$23,000 per year, and those on the lower end of the spectrum made just under \$20,000 per year.¹ For 2019, MIT found that the lowest full-time wage to meet basic

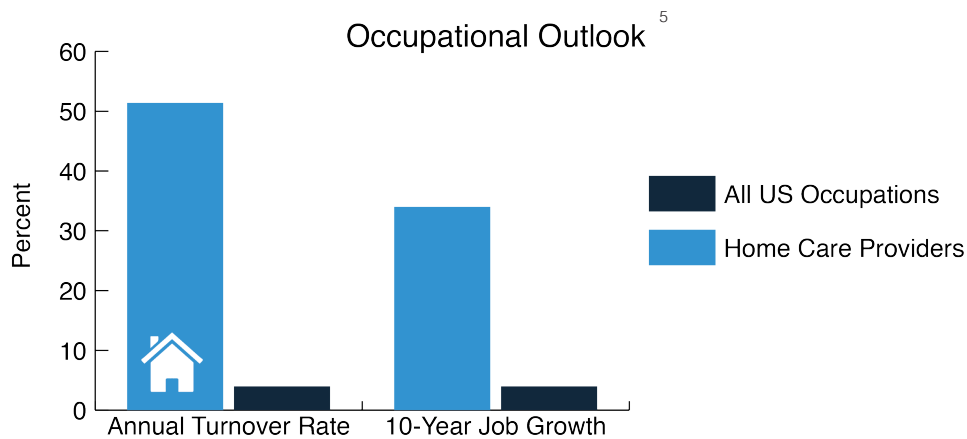
¹ Median and 10th percentile wage statistics come from the Bureau of Labor Statistics’ Occupational Employment



needs in Ohio was \$13.16.² Essentially, a home care provider working full-time with no children cannot pay for their own bare necessities. These positions must be filled, but Ohio’s skilled workers cannot afford to fill them.



As COVID-19 drives more people towards living in their communities, the system lacks the workforce needed to accommodate it. In the next 10 years, the Bureau of Labor Statistics projects that the need for this workforce will increase 34%—one of the fastest-growing professions in the US.⁴ With each biennial budget aiming for maintenance, wages for the provider workforce continue to fall substantially behind the cost of living and competitive pay for other skilled work. In fact, animal care and service workers—those who feed, groom, or train pets and zoo animals—make \$2,000 more per year than Home Care Providers. Providing key medical and daily care for older adults and people with disabilities is valued less than attending to animals—we must take action.



Statistics data: <https://data.bls.gov/oes/#/geoOcc/Multiple%20occupations%20for%20one%20geographical%20area>

2 MIT Living Wage Calculations: <https://livingwage.mit.edu/states/39>

3 Median pay per occupation according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics' Occupational Employment Statistics entries for Office Clerks, Retail Sales Workers, Animal Care Workers, and Home Care Providers

4 Due to an aging Baby Boomer population, as reported from the Bureau of Labor Statistics: <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/home-health-aides-and-personal-care-aides.htm#tab-6>

5 From the Bureau of Labor Statistics Report and National Survey linked above

Discrepancies in provider wages also exist within the HCBS system. Two individuals may provide similar or near-identical services, but different systems—like Medicaid and DODD—would pay them differently for the same work. Disparate wages create inequity, and providers often have no choice but to leave one person to work for another. While there is no dearth in funding for costly nursing facilities, providers across the entire HCBS system often wait years—or even decades—before seeing a meaningful increase in their pay.

In the US, the annual turnover rate for home care providers is 51.3%⁶, which is 14 times higher than the average turnover for all industries⁷. Each year, consumers have a 50/50 chance of losing their lifeline to another system or industry. Rapid turnover—whether to a different system or another career entirely—creates persistent instability, which means that individuals cannot complete daily tasks that are required for their health and safety. Ensuring equitable wages across all systems would effectively reduce turnover and increase stability for consumers.

Addressing other provider concerns—like access to PPE, hazard pay, and other costs incurred during the pandemic—is also critical. Providers are the backbone of the HCBS system, and taking the burden off these workers—through both state and federal programs—will be key in expanding the system’s capabilities. Ultimately, making providers responsible for these additional costs pushes workers out of the profession, threatening the availability of community services for individuals most at-risk for institutionalization.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony as an interested party on HB 110. If you have any questions or would like to discuss these issues further, please contact Jordan Ballinger at jballinger@disabilityrightsohio.org or at (740)-751-5724.

6 Reported in a National Survey of DSPs in 2020: [https://www.ancor.org/newsroom/news/nci-survey-direct-support-professional-turnover-now-available#:~:text=The%20newest%20National%20Core%20Indicators,\(DSPs\)%20is%2051.3%20percent](https://www.ancor.org/newsroom/news/nci-survey-direct-support-professional-turnover-now-available#:~:text=The%20newest%20National%20Core%20Indicators,(DSPs)%20is%2051.3%20percent)

7 According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics in a 2020 report: <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/jolts.pdf>