



Dear Members of the Senate Finance Committee:

I write to you as the Regional Director of ResCare Community Living of Ohio. ResCare is part of the family of brands of BrightSpring Health Services, the nation's leading provider of home and community-based services for high-need and medically complex populations. Throughout Ohio, the collective brands of BrightSpring provide service to nearly 12,000 individuals through a workforce of 1,600 direct care, pharmacy and clinical staff.

ResCare Community Living provides 24-7 residential waiver and Intermediate Care Facility (ICF) service, as well as day programming to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD). Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, our direct care workforce has operated on the frontlines delivering critical supports and services to the state's most medically complex populations.

I would like to begin by recognizing DODD for its continued partnership with the I/DD provider community during the COVID-19 pandemic. Since last year, Department leadership has worked to ensure that providers continue to have resources needed to safeguard critical programming and services for clients.

This COVID-19 response effort however has not been without challenges. Ohio continues to face a caregiver crisis, evident by our own organization's nearly 400 staffing vacancies statewide. Other states including Indiana are moving forward with increasing their average hourly DSP wage to \$15 per hour, causing certain hiring pressures here back home. And providers continue to absorb increases in unplanned costs associated with factors such as the purchase of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to ensure our front-line workforce and clients are properly protected.

As you begin consideration of the state budget, I understand and appreciate the difficult decisions you have in front of you. On behalf of ResCare, however, I respectfully ask for your support of much needed increased investments for the I/DD community including:

- Support for provider waiver rate increases to raise the average hourly wage for Direct Support Professionals (DSP) and other front-line professionals;
- Increased general revenue fund appropriations in DODD's budget to support the reimbursement formula for intermediate care facilities (ICF); and
- A budget amendment that would allow ICFs to choose between a reimbursement rate freeze or a continuation of the formula for the first year of the biennium.

Thank you for your consideration and all you continue to do in response to the pandemic.

Felicia Hall
Regional Director
ResCare Community Living