



Testimony on HB110-Operating Budget for State Fiscal Years 2022-2023
Senate Finance Committee
Lauren Holly, Chief Operating Officer, Easterseals Northern Ohio

Chairman Dolan, Vice-chair Gavarone, Ranking Member Sykes, and members of the Senate Finance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to share our thoughts on the state budget. My name is Lauren Holly, and I am the Chief Operating Officer of Easterseals Northern Ohio and we are located in northern Ohio, with facilities in Cuyahoga Falls, Medina, and Fremont providing a variety of services to 27 counties. We are a not-for-profit business, that provides a variety of supports for seniors and individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. We employ 46 individuals to deliver these services. We have been delivering services for over 102 years in Northern Ohio with a mission of making profound positive differences in individuals lives so that they are able to live, learn, work, and play in the community. I'm here today representing all of my adult day center colleagues throughout Ohio. The number of individuals in need of adult day services is growing, providers are shrinking and not returning after the extended closure, the requirements of providers are expanding, and the rates have remained unchanged since 2013.

One of the greatest ways that we can support seniors remaining in the community is through our Adult Day Services. We launched our senior adult day program in 2019, as a compliment to our non-medical home healthcare program in response to community need and a lack of stand-alone providers. These invaluable Senior Adult Day Services offer a community based, least restrictive way to keep seniors engaged in the community.

Adult Day service offers activities and social interaction with peers that directly combat loneliness and social isolation through structured programming. Adult day services also help to relieve caregiver stress offering a break from the 24/7 burden of caregiving for those that are at home daily with their loved ones. The result of being able to reduce caregiver burnout and provide respite, means that we can keep people in their homes longer and reduce the cost to the overall Medicaid system. Care in adult day is substantially less expensive than care in a nursing home, by over \$60,000 per year per person in some cases. For others, our Adult Day Service is what enables them to go to work during the day and ensure that their loved one is safe and cared for while they are away. This is of benefit not only to the individuals that we serve, but the economy at large, allowing individuals to remain employed in their community.

The benefits of this service really are innumerable, and yet we are facing a crisis in the industry. As a provider of many senior and disability services, we are acutely aware that the senior adult

day industry has had the greatest negative impact from the pandemic and is at a tipping point. Senior adult day programs suffered an extended shut down during the pandemic with a lapse in services of over 6 months, causing seniors to decline without appropriate services and burdened providers with astronomical financial losses. In addition, the requirements to bring individuals back to the centers were so burdensome that many individuals did not return, and many providers did not reopen. Shortly after the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic we were made aware of a provider in neighboring Sandusky County who decided to cease providing services due to the extended closure and the stagnant rates. This is unfortunately an all too common story, of the surveyed providers in the state 34% have permanently closed and 21% want to reopen but are unable to under the current conditions. This leaves only 45% of the original provider base available to serve the community. This severe shortage of providers is further complicated by the fact that those providers that have reopened are only able to serve 20-50% of their original capacity. So overall, the industry is not even serving 20% of the individuals it did pre-pandemic.

As a home health provider, we are aware of the long waiting lists of individuals that are awaiting home care because of the workforce crisis. Case managers use adult day centers as a way to get these individuals care and prevent decline. It is easier to staff and deliver services in a congregate setting and it ultimately provides a greater positive social and clinical impact to individuals to be engaged in a program in the community.

To best support these services and the Ohioans who receive and provide them, I encourage you to support the addition of the adult day focused initiatives back into Ohio's biennium budget:

- ~~• Updating the 2013 PASSPORT adult day payments by a 3% annual inflation factor to bring it current with the cost of care and in line with other states.~~
- ~~• Increasing transportation to align with current costs, and doing away with caps which discriminate against rural residing clients.~~
- ~~• Model adult day absence payments after childcare payments, allowing predictable payment even when there is an unexpected absence.~~ **which includes a modest investment of \$5 million per year of the biennium.**

This ~~\$9.5~~ investment will shore up Ohio's adult day providers, ensuring that we will be available to meet Ohio's future needs, ensuring caregivers can continue to participate in the workforce, and providing a safe place for older Ohioans to go during the day, keeping them out of higher cost care setting. This argument was supported by the prior Administration, with Adult Day being one of the few HCBS programs to receive a funding increase in 2013.

With your leadership, together we can ensure these services are available to the Ohioans that so greatly need them! **Thank you again, for the opportunity and privilege to bring my concerns before you and if I can ever be of any help in this process, please let me know.**

~~Regards,~~

~~Lauren Holly~~

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