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“Advanced Leadership in Home Care”

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My name is Heather Ervin. I am a nurse and the General Manager for A&L Home Care and Training Center. Our administrative office is in Proctorville, with branch offices in Ironton and Gallipolis. Our Agency began in 2005 with the sole concentration of preventing residents in Ohio from being removed from their homes and placed in long term care facilities for the final years of their lives. Our Agency participates with PASSPORT, Medicare, Medicaid, including managed care (Caresource, Molina, United Healthcare, Buckeye, and Ameritus Healthcare), Ohio Home Care Waivers, Caresource Waivers, Department of Developmental Disability Waivers, Veterans' Administration, Workers' Compensation, Hospital 2 Home and National Family Caregiver Support Program. Our staff consists of home health aides, State Tested Nursing Assistants, Certified Nursing Assistant, State Registered Nursing Assistant, Medical Assistants, Licensed Practical Nurses, Registered Nurses, Physical, Occupational and Speech therapists and office staff. Today we are a staff of over 300 providing care to almost 500 patients in Lawrence and Gallia counties.

The home health care industry has faced a shortage of workers for years; however, the COVID-19 pandemic was the end to many additional healthcare careers. Although PPE has always been a part of healthcare, we all know this was different. Vaccine mandates detoured many from applying and encouraged many to leave healthcare. Overtime hours contributed to caregiver burnout, many had children at home who were unable to attend school and the immense loss felt by the deaths of patients, co-workers and family in our small communities proved to be more than some could handle. This has been an unprecedented time in home health care.

Our Agency is also a training center for home health aides and State Tested Nursing Assistants. In a recruitment effort, we have offered free training courses, sign-on bonuses, increased rates of pay and employee referral bonuses. No one is applying. It is impossible to retain employees, who as the President called in his State of the Union address as doing God's work, by offering minimum wage. Our main office sits across the street from McDonald's offering \$15 dollars an hour.

In the past two years, two longstanding home health agencies in Lawrence County have closed their doors. We do not want to be the next. Our home health workers drive their own vehicles, paying for their own gas and oil changes, to multiple homes in the same day, multiple times a week. We have patients with no family and we are the only faces they see and talk to each day. We make sure the medications are picked up at pharmacy and food is brought from the grocery store or the free food giveaways in each county. Our workers find patients who have fallen and laid in the floor until our next scheduled shift and patients who never woke with the sun that morning.

I ask you for an increase in reimbursement so we can provide a wage that home health workers can focus on their patients, not how they are going to feed their children. I ask you for an increase in reimbursement so there is not one consumer in Ohio without an Agency provider, as of January there were 4500 according to PASSPORT. I ask you to preserve the right of every Ohioan to spend their final days in their own home.

Best Regards,
Heather Ervin

