

Ohio House
Finance Subcommittee on Health and Human Services
House Bill 33
Alan Cochrun, Fairborn, Ohio
March 22, 2023

Chair Carruthers, Ranking Member Liston, and members of the Finance Subcommittee on Health and Human Services, my name is Alan Cochrun, and I am an independent provider of Home and Community Based services under the Ohio Medicaid Waiver program.

Today, I join with disability rights advocates from across Ohio in thanking you for the opportunity to provide interested party testimony on House Bill 33, Ohio's FY 2024-2025 budget bill, regarding Home and Community Based Services.

I am writing to testify in support of Ohio's budget hearings to increase fair and reasonable pay rates for independent in-home health care providers. Independent human services providers represent an important portion of the health care workforce that delivers vital health and social services to Ohioans. However, independent providers are often not adequately reimbursed for their service, resulting in low wages and limited job security. Increasing pay rates for independent health care providers will ensure that Ohioans have access to the care they need while also helping to build a more sustainable in-home health care workforce.

Ohioans with disabilities are currently in crisis because they cannot find, hire, and keep in-home direct care workers to assist with daily living needs and/or skilled nursing tasks that are necessary to stay in their homes and not be forced into institutions. This crisis impacts people who receive Home and Community Based Services through waivers from the Ohio Department of Medicaid, Ohio Department of Aging, and the Department of Developmental Disabilities. Home care workers include both skilled workers who offer nursing care and the direct care workers and personal care aides who help with activities of daily living.

Independent home care providers do not get holiday pay. They do not receive vacation pay nor sick pay. If a provider is injured while providing these vital services, there is no Worker's Compensation and most cannot afford health insurance. Given today's uncertain financial times many providers have moved to more secure income sources. This trend will only continue and there will continue to be a reduction in new providers in the future. Raising the provider pay rates will help to diminish the trend of current providers leaving home care and make home care more attractive to prospective providers.

Home care providers are a lifeline to people who rely on their services to live independent, self-determined lives in the community. They are dedicated to assisting individuals with quality care and daily living activities. Without an immediate action plan to resolve the caregiver crisis in Ohio, individuals relying on their assistance will continue to lose more providers. The loss in coverage would mean many individuals would be forced into entering nursing homes or other long term care facilities which would bring a loss of dignity, loss of voice, and the loss of ability to make their own choices, losing their jobs, their homes, their pets, their independence. Increasing independent, in-home care provider pay rates is a starting point to curbing this trend.

I urge the committee to consider enacting legislation that would increase the wages of independent, in-home health care providers in the state budget.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully submitted this 22nd day of March, 2023.

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