



Testimony of Jared Isenthal

Vice President of Development, Evergreen Real Estate Group

Testimony on House Bill 96

Date: March 4, 2025

Chair White, Vice-Chair Salvo, Ranking Member Lett, and members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony on the critical need for Medicaid rate adjustments for assisted living in Ohio. My name is Jared Isenthal, and I serve as the Vice President of Development at Evergreen Real Estate Group, a company dedicated to expanding access to affordable assisted living across Ohio and other states.

I write today to highlight the necessity of continued investment in Medicaid-assisted living rates and the long-term financial and social benefits such adjustments would provide to both Ohio's seniors and the state budget.

The Need for Sustainable Rate Adjustments

Ohio is experiencing a rapid increase in its aging population. By 2030, more than 3 million Ohioans will be over the age of 60, and by 2040, one in four residents will be a senior. The demand for quality assisted living services will only continue to rise, yet the availability of affordable assisted living options remains limited due to financial barriers.

The Medicaid rate increases were a significant step forward, allowing providers to attract and retain direct care workers. This workforce investment directly translated into an expansion of services, with the Assisted Living Waiver program experiencing a 17% increase in participation following the rate adjustments. However, without continued incremental rate increases, we risk reversing these gains, leading to workforce instability and reduced capacity to serve seniors in need.

Cost Savings for the State

Sustained Medicaid rate increases for assisted living are not just an investment in senior care; they are a fiscally responsible strategy for Ohio. Assisted living provides a cost-effective alternative to skilled nursing facilities, which carry a significantly higher cost per Medicaid resident. By ensuring adequate reimbursement for assisted living services, the state can reduce reliance on higher-cost institutional care and expand access to home and community based solutions that provide seniors with the independence and dignity they deserve.



- The cost of Medicaid-funded skilled nursing care is approximately twice that of assisted living.
- Expanding assisted living capacity reduces premature placement into nursing homes, ultimately saving Ohio's Medicaid program millions in long-term expenditures.
- States that have implemented predictable, incremental rate increases have successfully stabilized their direct care workforce and expanded senior housing options without substantial future budget spikes.

A Path Forward

To sustain Ohio's progress and ensure that seniors have access to affordable assisted living options, we strongly urge the Committee to consider:

1. **Implementing Modest, Predictable Rate Increases** – Adjustments of 3.4% in 2026 and 2.3% in 2027 will enable providers to continue offering competitive wages, ensuring a stable workforce while preventing service disruptions.
2. **Establishing a Long-Term Rate Adjustment Mechanism** – Authorizing the Departments of Aging and Medicaid to update provider reimbursement rates based on cost-of-care data will create a sustainable model that prevents crisis-driven funding decisions.
3. **Providing Retainer Payments for Assisted Living Communities** – Allowing residents to temporarily leave their facility without losing their Medicaid support will enhance flexibility and security for seniors while ensuring financial stability for providers.

Ohio has the opportunity to continue leading in innovative senior care solutions by ensuring that Medicaid-assisted living rates support long-term program expansion. By implementing structured rate increases, we not only improve access to affordable assisted living but also make a fiscally sound investment that will generate savings for the state while enhancing the quality of life for our seniors.

We appreciate your time and consideration of these critical measures. We welcome any questions and look forward to working together to strengthen Ohio's long-term care infrastructure.

Thank you.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "JARED /SENTHAL".

Jared Isenthal

Vice President of Development

Evergreen Real Estate Group