

Dear Chair Gross, Vice Chair Barnhurst, Ranking Member Baker, and other Esteemed Legislators of the House Medicaid Committee,

I hope this letter finds you well. My name is Allison Boot, and I was honored to serve as Ms. Wheelchair Ohio 2023 and am still a strong advocate to this day. I am writing to you today to express my deep concern regarding potential cuts to Medicaid funding and to urge you to protect and enhance this vital program.

As a woman living with a significant disability, I know firsthand how crucial home and community-based services are to my daily life and the lives of many individuals like me. These services allow me to carry out basic daily activities, such as bathing, dressing, and engaging with my community. Without Medicaid, these essential supports would be at risk, leaving countless individuals like me without the care we need to thrive.

I relocated back to Ohio after living in Illinois, facing numerous challenges in accessing Medicaid and home and community-based services. Although my husband and I are strong advocates who eventually received help from our county, the process took far longer than it should have. Many individuals with disabilities struggle for much longer to receive the assistance they require, and they often find themselves in precarious situations without adequate support.

The national median cost for full-time home care is \$5,720 per month, while the median monthly expense for nursing home care is \$8,669, according to the life insurance company Genworth Financial. Additional cuts to Medicaid would likely leave many individuals with disabilities without adequate support, pushing them into institutional settings. Furthermore, providing institutional care for these individuals would ultimately be more expensive for the country than investing in home and community-based care.

The United States signed the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2009, committing to ensuring the full enjoyment of human rights for people with disabilities. It is imperative that we uphold this commitment by ensuring access to home and community-based services for all individuals. Supporting these services not only empowers people with disabilities but also enriches our communities and the country as a whole.

I consider myself lucky to contribute to society and pursue the American Dream by holding multiple jobs. It frightens me to imagine what my life – and the lives of individuals with disabilities who aren't as fortunate as I am – would be like if home and community-based services were reduced or became inaccessible in the United States. I sincerely hope I never have to confront that reality.

Part of my mission as an advocate is to inspire youth with disabilities to dream big and pursue their aspirations. The opportunity to advocate for the disability community through this letter is a significant dream for me, made possible by the support of the home and community-based services I receive. I urge you to consider the impact that cuts to Medicaid would have on individuals with disabilities and their ability to lead fulfilling lives.

In closing, I implore you to support funding for Medicaid and home and community-based services rather than make cuts. Together, we can ensure that people with disabilities have the opportunity to dream big and fully participate in society. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Allison M. Boot