

Written Testimony on HB110-Operating Budget for State Fiscal Years 2022-2023
Ohio Senate Health, Human Services & Medicaid Committee
May 4, 2021

Chair Huffman, Vice Chair Antani, Ranking Member Antonio and members of the House Finance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to share my thoughts on the state budget and in particular our organizational struggle with our census and unscheduled absences with our participants as it relates to Adult Day Services. My name is John Gazzuolo, and I am the Director of the Adult Day Center of Jennings, in northeast Ohio. I have been the Director since the end of November 2020 and I can already see the long-term struggle with increasing our census. We reopened at the end of September 2020 to reduced numbers. At capacity we can serve up to 50 participants. Currently we have had a recent high of 14. We have lost participants due to the fear of Covid-19 that still exists and change of health status including declining health and a number of deaths. In addition, many caregivers are working from home currently and choosing to provide care at their residence. Opening requirements including masking and social distancing has made it difficult for some participants to return as they cannot comply.

Pre-pandemic, our goal for adult day at Jennings is just to break even. It has been impossible to meet that goal while serving individuals with limited means and through the PASSPORT program. The rules around staffing, which dictate that direct caregivers have one staff for every 6 participants is not sustainable under the current rate structure. One of two things need to happen: either decrease the staffing ratio to numbers that the reimbursement supports or increase the reimbursement. We have not had an increase to the PASSPORT rates since 2013. If Ohio wants to be able to continue offering this service to older Ohioans, we must be paid rates that are reflective of the costs to run the programs.

The other issue I wanted to mention in my short time at Jennings is the number of unscheduled absences we have experienced. It is imperative to the daily planning of staff, programming and meals to have close to an accurate number of participants on the books as possible. The harsh winter season is certainly always going to be a factor. Medical appointments will always be necessary for our participants. At times poor communication from some of our families contribute to these unscheduled absences. As the Director, I have had to make difficult decisions with sending capable staff home as they were not needed that day or reassign them all together. I have seen in the past that this trend will lead to good, honest, hardworking staff to seek other employment and career choices. We need reimbursement with these unscheduled absences cases to offset some of these costs that we incur. Childcare centers have a certain amount of absences reimbursed through the voucher program, and we believe that adult day centers should be afforded the same.

Thank you for taking the time to read my testimony and taking into consideration our request to preserve the funding appropriated in the House for PASSPORT adult day services.

Sincerely,

John Gazzuolo
Executive Director, Jennings Adult Day Center