

**Testimony for Senate Health, Human Services & Medicaid Committee**  
**on Adult Day Services for Operating Budget SFY 2022-23**

May 5, 2021

Tom Thompson, Executive Director, JRC

Chairman Huffman, Vice-chair Antani, Ranking Member Antonio, and members of the Senate Health, Human Services & Medicaid Committee, thank you for the opportunity to share our thoughts on the state budget in relation to adult day services. My name is Tom Thompson, Executive Director of JRC, a non-profit organization in Canton which operates an adult day center as part of its mission. Today, I am representing my adult day colleagues throughout Ohio. During non-pandemic times, JRC would be averaging over 50 seniors per day participating in adult day services at JRC's new state-of-the-art center. Currently, there is an average of 15 persons attending JRC Adult Day Center daily, which is about 30% of expected attendance. Over 70% of attendees are PASSPORT clientele.

Adult day centers are needed more than ever, both for post-pandemic reasons and as our baby boomer population ages. However, many adult day centers are at-risk of closing or never re-opening their doors after the pandemic. I'm here to explain why Ohio's adult day reimbursement rate is not a sustainable financial model. We are at a crisis point in the decreasing number of adult day centers in the state of Ohio.

Adult day centers support seniors with physical or social-emotional challenges, and a growing population of seniors with dementia-related illnesses. The bulk of those attending our programs are served through PASSPORT. Each person on the PASSPORT program has a long-term care level of care which means that without adult day services, they would likely be residing in a nursing home, costing the state much more in Medicaid dollars. Currently, the PASSPORT program reimburses adult day centers less than \$50 per day with a required staffing ratio of 1:6. This low reimbursement rate doesn't meet the need of paying for quality staff and covering costs such as meals, housing, utilities, and administrative costs which are all associated with quality services. JRC's private pay rate for Enhanced services is \$65 per day, and JRC will soon provide Intensive services projected to cost \$85 per day. A nursing home cost per day? 2 to 3 times this cost.

Not only are health care costs lower, if we can keep seniors in a community setting for a longer period of time, quality of life is higher. Many seniors in adult day settings actually thrive and improve or maintain their health while attending adult day centers. Exercise, activities, quality nutrition, health maintenance and socialization all play a role in supporting a senior's health outcomes, and that is exactly what an adult day center provides.

JRC worked hard to support individuals in their homes during COVID; the adult day staff even provided remote activities such as delivering lunches, providing well-being checks, and virtual activities during the shutdown. That helped but didn't meet the long term needs of seniors. When JRC Adult Day Center closed for 7 months last year due to the pandemic, many caregivers were distraught as they had to decide to either give up jobs or put their loved ones into long term care facilities, a horrible decision. At

least 4 seniors attending JRC Adult Day Center were placed in long term care facilities within 2 months after the center closed in March 2020.

As I've just described, adult day centers also support caregivers and their ability to work. Spouses, adult children, and others often miss work or have to leave a job as they are needed at home to care for their loved ones. Adult day is a cost-effective way to maintain the caregiver – allowing them to remain employed and/or to receive respite in order to continue their caregiving.

Take the story of Brad and Heidi. Heidi developed early onset dementia in her mid-fifties. Brad was working and could initially leave Heidi home alone during the day. As Heidi's dementia worsened, Brad was forced to miss work and was concerned as to how he could keep his job with Heidi's increasing needs. Brad found JRC Adult Day Center could provide Heidi with the services she needed throughout the day while he worked. Brad was eventually able to retire, and then used JRC Adult Day Center as respite until Heidi's recent entry into long-term care. Without adult day services, either Brad would have needed to quit his job or Heidi would have been in a long-term care setting years earlier.

The House heard from adult day constituents statewide about the impact of the prolonged isolation experienced at home, and decided to single out adult day—both for older Ohioans as well as for the developmentally disabled population—as providers that needed critical support in this budget. They included a \$10 million investment over the biennium, to be used to increase reimbursement for adult day as well as transportation to and from adult day. We anticipate these funds will bring funding into alignment with neighboring states and come close to covering the actual costs of care. Furthermore, we hope that the funding will stop the shuttering of adult day centers across Ohio, which now number fewer than 100.

This investment will save the existence of adult day centers as a viable option in the continuum of aging services for Ohio's oldest and most vulnerable citizens. Thank you for the opportunity to testify, and I would be happy to answer any questions.