

**The Ohio Home and Community-Based Services Coalition
Interested Party Testimony on House Bill 110
Senate Health Committee
May 6th, 2021**



Chairman Huffman, Vice Chair Antani, Ranking Member Antonio, and members of Senate Health Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide written-only, interested party testimony in consideration of House Bill 110 (HB 110)—the state’s biennial budget. The Ohio Home and Community-Based Services Coalition (Ohio HCBS Coalition) is a group of over 100 advocacy organizations, individual providers, and advocates with the mission to protect and expand home and community-based services (HCBS) in Ohio.

The Senate Health Committee should increase provider rates 5% in each year of the biennium.

In addition to the rate increase, language should be included that ensures these investments make it to our direct care workforce. This workforce is significantly underpaid and it is difficult for individuals to find providers. The need for home care workers is projected to increase 34% over the next 10 years, and yet these skilled workers make less than a living wage for a single adult in Ohio. Over the course of a year, 1 in every 2 workers will leave their jobs, often unable to support themselves on the average wage of \$11.08 per hour or just over \$23,000 per year.

It is important to note, this workforce is disproportionately made up of black, indigenous, women of color. By not supporting this workforce, Ohio is exacerbating inequities in the state and placing additional burden on the working class. Additionally, a large share of this workforce relies on other state assistance programs. Specifically, 53% of home care workers receive public assistance with 39% on Medicaid. In 2018, 57% of the home care workforce was earning less than 138% of the poverty level. Continuing to underpay this essential workforce while other industries pay a higher wage for less demanding work is a serious issue. People with disabilities, older Ohioans, and our direct care workforce deserve to be supported in this budget.

A 5% increase in provider rates for home health is a necessary step to support people with disabilities and older adults live independently in their homes and communities. Direct care workers and their agencies have been underfunded for far too long, ensuring providers and their agencies are fully supported through the state budget can help build out a system capacity that allows individuals to receive care in their home and prevent institutionalization. If we do not support this workforce, people with disabilities and older adults will continue to have unmet needs in their community and be forced into costly institutional care.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony as an interested party on HB 110. If you have any questions or would like to discuss this issue further, please contact Jordan Ballinger at jballinger@disabilityrightsohio.org or at (740)-751-5724.