



The Honorable Joe Biden
United States President
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden:

On behalf of the American Network of Community Options and Resources (ANCOR) and Easterseals, we are writing to offer our support for your efforts as you begin implementing the American Rescue Plan Act and to offer recommendations to enhance these efforts to further stabilize the Medicaid Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) program. We write to further elaborate upon a letter which the Service Employees Union International, the Domestic Workers Alliance, and other national groups sent recently to you, addressing the need for a \$450 billion infusion in the program. While we are immensely grateful for the funding included in the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), ANCOR and Easterseals join the signatories of that letter to encourage the Administration to also advance longer-term investments in the Medicaid HCBS program.

ANCOR is a national, nonprofit trade association representing more than 1,600 private community providers of services to people with disabilities which are funded almost exclusively by Medicaid, particularly the HCBS program. Combined, we support over one million individuals with disabilities, and work to shape policy, share solutions and strengthen community. The Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) our members employ have been on the frontlines of the pandemic. DSPs help people with disabilities remain safe at home rather than in congregate settings where they are more likely to contract COVID-19, by assisting with essential tasks such as grocery shopping, daily hygiene and making good health decisions.

Easterseals is one of the nation's leading provider of services that measurably improve the health and wellbeing of people with disabilities throughout the lifespan through our Network of 67 Affiliates in 48 states.

While ARPA contained a much needed and appreciated temporary 10 percent increase in the federal medical assistance percentage (FMAP) for the HCBS program, it is important to understand that critical challenges will remain after this funding expires. The HCBS FMAP bump included in ARPA will help address significant new expenses specific to the pandemic, but that alone cannot prevent instability in the system caused by years of under-investment prior to the pandemic. Decades without significant Medicaid rate increases to reflect growing demand for HCBS placement led to a long-running recruitment and retention crisis in the DSP workforce comprised of a majority of female and minority staff. High DSP turnover rates in turn affected people with disabilities' well-being and ability to live full and independent lives in the community. While the pandemic created its own challenges for recruitment and retention, before the pandemic Medicaid providers already could not compete with entry-level salaries at Amazon, hotels,

restaurants, retail chains and other less emotionally demanding jobs, and will not be able to do so after the pandemic without further federal action.

We urge the Administration to ensure the HCBS program can build back better after the pandemic by continuing to fund a dedicated FMAP beyond the one year included in ARPA. This will allow Medicaid providers to become competitive employers and invest in their workforce as much as they would want to if they were not restrained by fixed, non-negotiable Medicaid rates. This in turn would create benefits throughout American society, particularly since the communities many DSPs and HCBS beneficiaries belong to have long been affected by income inequality.

We also urge the Administration to include triggers for counter-cyclical Medicaid rate increases. As mentioned in the SEIU et al. letter, this would ensure states cannot cut services at a time when they should be expanding them. We also encourage the Administration to ensure automatic increases so that workers' wages are raised adequately and are adjusted for inflation and rising wage standards on an ongoing basis. This would help reduce wage compression between senior employees and supervisors and new recruits, which is another reason for turnover in the DSP workforce.

If you have any questions, please reach out to Sarah Meek, ANCOR's Senior Director of Legislative Affairs, at smeek@ancor.org or (202) 258-4462, or Connie Garner, Easterseals Public Policy Advisor, at cgarner@easterseals.com or (703)919-2837.

We look forward to working with you to bring stability and peace of mind to people with disabilities and the DSPs who support them during the pandemic and build towards a brighter future once we emerge from the pandemic.

Sincerely,



Barbara Merrill
Chief Executive Officer
ANCOR



Angela F. Williams
President and CEO
Easterseals