



September 15, 2021

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Senate Majority Leader
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Senate Minority Leader
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
1236 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
House Minority Leader
2468 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Leader Schumer, Leader McConnell, Speaker Pelosi, and Leader McCarthy:

On behalf of the American Network of Community Options and Resources (ANCOR), I write to urge your support for the full \$400 billion investment included in the Build Back Better Agenda to support expanded access to Medicaid Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) and recruitment and retention of direct care workers that support people who rely on HCBS.

ANCOR is a national, nonprofit trade association representing more than 1,600 private community providers of services to people with disabilities, mostly funded by the Medicaid program. Combined, we support over one million individuals with disabilities, and work to share policy, shape solutions and strengthen the community. Through the Medicaid program, which funds the majority of disability supports in the United States, our members offer a broad range of supports to help people with disabilities live full and independent lives in the community.

I appreciate the steps Congress has taken to strengthen and expand access to Medicaid HCBS, including the temporary 10-percent increase in the Federal Match Assistance Percentage (FMAP) that was included in the American Rescue Plan Act and the proposal put forward by the House Energy and Commerce Committee to invest \$190 billion in HCBS as part of the Build Back Better Act. However, this investment of \$190 billion falls far short of the bold proposal in the Build Back Better Agenda to fund HCBS at \$400 billion and is insufficient to remedy the decades of underinvestment in the Medicaid HCBS program.

Congress must do more to address the crisis facing the direct care workforce—a crisis which has only been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. The effects of underinvestment in the direct care workforce can be seen in turnover rates among direct support professionals that hover near 50 percent nationally. The resulting inaccessibility of HCBS for people with disabilities is in turn evidenced by the nearly 600,000 people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) on states' ever-growing HCBS waiting lists. These waiting lists leave people with disabilities and their families waiting years and even decades for services.

These relentless challenges illustrate why \$190 billion in dedicated support for HCBS is not sufficient to begin addressing the magnitude of unmet need in our communities. Without full funding, states cannot expand access to services for people with IDD or meaningfully invest in the direct care workforce—a workforce which is predominantly composed of women and workers of color. Partial funding provides only for partial stopgap approaches without long-term solutions or sustainable infrastructure. This type of underinvestment undermines the very goal of this legislation, which is to strengthen the ability of people with disabilities and our aging neighbors to live a life with dignity in their communities. Without sustainability in the direct care workforce, access to services remains threatened and opportunity to create countless jobs and strengthen local economies is lost.

A \$400 billion investment is necessary to repair the cracks in the existing infrastructure and create infrastructure that was never built to ensure HCBS is within reach for the nearly one million families currently waiting. HCBS has grown exponentially since its inception 40 years ago and now plays an outsized role in ensuring people can be supported in the community, rather than being warehoused in large, state-run institutions. However, absent the necessary infrastructure investments—particularly in an overworked, underpaid and underappreciated direct care workforce—the Medicaid HCBS program will continue to fall far short of reaching everyone in need.

I remain grateful for your leadership in supporting people with disabilities and our aging neighbors and now respectfully ask that you lead the way once more. I urge you to prioritize the needs of people with disabilities by preserving the proposed \$400 billion investment in the Medicaid HCBS program, including the 1 million+ workers who deliver the program's essential services.

ANCOR appreciates your consideration and stands ready to be a resource to you. Please reach out to us if you have any questions or would like to discuss this further.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Barbara Merrill". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name and title.

Barbara Merrill
Chief Executive Officer