



December 3, 2021

United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator:

On behalf of the American Network of Community Options and Resources (ANCOR), I write to urge your support for the Build Back Better Act insofar as it includes an investment to expand and strengthen Medicaid Home and Community Based Services (HCBS).

ANCOR is a national, nonprofit trade association representing more than 1,800 private community providers of services to people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD), 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.

Congress must address the crisis facing the direct care workforce—a crisis which has only been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. A 2021 survey conducted by ANCOR reveals a dire situation of high turnover and insufficient staffing among providers. According to ANCOR's 2021 *State of America's Direct Support Workforce Crisis*¹:

- 77% of providers have been forced to turn away new referrals.
- 58% of providers have discontinued programs and services.
- 81% of providers are struggling to achieve quality standards.
- Nearly 3 in 10 providers report spending more than \$500,000 annually on costs associated with high turnover and vacancy rates.
- 92% of providers report that the COVID-19 pandemic continues to complicate their ability to recruit and retain qualified direct support professionals, in large part because industries that previously paid comparable wages now pay employees more than providers can afford to offer.

These relentless challenges illustrate why a robust investment in dedicated support for HCBS is necessary to begin addressing the magnitude of unmet need in our communities. A growing workforce crisis has resulted in a decrease in accessibility of HCBS for people with disabilities. Currently, nearly 800,000 people with are on states' HCBS waiting lists. These waiting lists leave people with disabilities and their families waiting years and even decades for services.

The Build Back Better Agenda initially included a bold proposal for an investment of \$400 billion in HCBS. However, the Build Back Better Act as passed by the House of

¹ American Network of Community Options and Resources, *The State of America's Direct Support Workforce 2021*, available at https://www.ancor.org/sites/default/files/the_state_of_americas_direct_support_workforce_crisis_2021.pdf.

Representatives includes an investment of just under \$150 billion for HCBS. As negotiations continue on the Build Back Better Act, it is imperative that at a minimum the legislation maintains the same \$150 billion investment in HCBS. This investment is critical in ensuring states can take steps to expand access to services for people with I/DD or meaningfully invest in the direct care workforce—a workforce which is predominantly composed of women and workers of color. Without a sustainable direct care workforce, access to services remains threatened.

In addition, without such an investment, local communities forgo opportunities to create countless jobs and strengthen local economies. It is estimated that the Build Back Better Act's investment in Medicaid HCBS would create and support 390,000 new jobs each year over 10 years and add an estimated \$4 billion in additional income for current workers each year.²

ANCOR respectfully asks that you continue to prioritize the needs of people with disabilities and the more than one million workers who deliver their services by investing in the Medicaid HCBS program.

We appreciate your consideration of this important matter. Please reach out to Shannon McCracken, Vice President for Government Relations (smccracken@ancor.org), if you have any questions or would like to discuss this further.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Barbara Merrill". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Barbara Merrill
Chief Executive Officer
ANCOR

² Women Effect Action Fund, *What Build Back Better Means for Women & Working Families*, available at http://womeneffectactionfund.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/WEAF_BBB_National_v1.5.pdf.