



May 6, 2021

The Honorable Rob Portman
United States Senator
448 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kyrsten Sinema
United States Senator
317 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Portman and Sinema:

On behalf of the American Network of Community Options and Resources (ANCOR), I write to express our support for the Healthy Workplaces Act (S.537). We appreciate that this legislation could help our members recover from significant costs incurred from purchasing personal protective equipment (PPE) for their staff and the people with disabilities they support during the pandemic.

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. The Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) our members employ are on the frontlines of the pandemic, keeping people with disabilities healthy and safe in the community. They help people with disabilities find employment, perform daily hygiene, go grocery shopping, and make healthy decisions. They often have little ability to physically distance due to the intimate nature of the work, making PPE particularly essential in this field.

The Healthy Workplaces Act would give our members some relief from PPE expenses they largely did not have to budget for prior to the pandemic. It will particularly help some of our members who were not eligible for the Paycheck Protection Program. Additionally, the tax credit could help offset significant loss of revenue from having to close lines of service either because of social distancing requirements or high DSP turnover. Disability supports are faced with a crippling workforce crisis which leads to a national turnover rate of nearly 43 percent. This crisis has numerous causes but states setting low Medicaid reimbursement rates, which lead to low wages and limited benefits, are a primary cause. This was further compounded by DSPs' concerns for their own safety and their family obligations during the pandemic. Ultimately, low retention and recruitment leads to disruptions in essential supports for people with disabilities. Any financial support, such as that given by the Health Workplaces Act's tax credit, can help our members further advance their missions.

While this tax credit will help address short-term challenges facing Medicaid disability providers, it behooves us to urge you to also support longer-term solutions to funding issues laid out above. This essential system has been pushed to the breaking point by the pandemic and years of systemic underinvestment prior to that. It will need significant investments to meet increased demand from people with disabilities yearning to rejoin mainstream society after the pandemic. We hope that in addition to the Healthy Workplaces Act, you will support provisions for long-term funding for Medicaid supports in future bipartisan legislative packages.

We appreciate your efforts to address challenges facing employers during the pandemic. Please feel free to reach out to me at smeek@ancor.org if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sarah Long Mich". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Sarah Meek
Senior Director of Legislative Affairs

Cc: Senate Finance Committee Chairman Wyden
Senate Finance Committee Ranking Member Crapo