

May 5, 2021

To: Senate Health, Human Services & Medicaid Committee

From: Eric Murray, Executive Director of Senior Services, Youngstown Area Jewish Federation,
Youngstown, OH 44504

Topic: Written Testimony supporting increase in funding for Adult Day services

Members of the senate Health, Human Services & Medicaid Committee, I am writing to you to express my hope that additional funding for Ohio's Adult Day centers receives your support. I started in my role here at the Youngstown Area Jewish Federation on March 9, 2019 and approximately one week later, our Adult Day was closed due the pandemic. Fortunately, as part of a nursing home facility, we were able to reassign staff and stay current on the latest updates through our intensive work in operating the nursing home during the pandemic.

As we made the decision to reopen, it became quite clear there would be some financial risk and we performed several pro formas to determine our potential financial exposure. I remember determining that transportation costs would have the greatest impact on our ability to at least break even. Our previous contracted transportation provider was unable to keep their transportation costs firm, so we elected to take on the vast majority of the transportation needs of our clients. We outfitted the bus with safety glass and created new, yet inefficient trip routes which allowed for COVID-friendly seating arrangements. This increased our total roundtrips to four a day instead of two, while reimbursement remained flat. Ultimately, we made the decision to reopen and after hearing some of our client's stories it was the right decision. Our Adult Day director, when asked about the impact on our closing mentioned one client went on to assisted living because they could not be safe with the level of services they were receiving, one client's wife reduced her work to part-time because no one was available to take care of her husband's needs, one ended up hospitalized due to inability to monitor their health as well as numerous other negative consequences such as falls and physical, cognitive and emotional decline.

Ultimately, we were open just a few weeks and lost our driver to a positive COVID test result (he has since recovered). In the meantime, we have been unable to find a driver, even at an increased wage. Finally, I have since had the resignation of my Adult Day director, a job she enjoyed but with the constant open/closing reality created workforce stability concerns (as one of many factors in her decision, including the opportunity to return to school for her RN license). As a result, we have yet to reopen.

Adult Day Programs provide tremendous value, from keeping families and spouses in the work force, to much need respite as well as the most cost effective services to balance more complex needs with cost-effective solutions. For our Adult Day program, besides finding a new director and driver our task of rebuilding our program in a safe and COVID-compliant format will be our next challenge.

Being new to the industry with this new role, I was surprised to hear that an increase in financial support hadn't occurred since 2013. As part of the Ohio Department of Aging strategy, Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) must be properly funded to allow the migration to a more proactive delivery model, not reactive. As we consider workforce shortages, increasing ages of workforce and potential solutions, the role of Adult Day Care is paramount to providing the necessary flexibility to have the best opportunity for a successful healthcare delivery model. By preserving the funding appropriated by the House to PASSPORT adult day services and transportation, you will help us financially invest in our program and grow our service to meet the community needs.

Your time and consideration is greatly appreciated.

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