



*We're in the Business of **Amazing People***

March 24, 2020

Dear Senator Mike Braun, Senator Todd Young, Representative Pete Visclosky, Governor Eric Holcomb, Lieutenant Governor Suzanne Crouch, Senator Ed Charbonneau, and Senator Ed Soliday,

This current public health crisis caused by COVID-19 could potentially break the systems that society has in place for all of us. This pandemic is illustrating how fragile the system is, and underscores the value of Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) and how essential they are to our healthcare system in serving those with intellectual and developmental disabilities nationwide. Agencies providing services to adults with disabilities are in crisis. In Indiana, there are more than 70 Medicaid-funded service providers, like Opportunity Enterprises. In order to practice social distancing, OE and many other providers are temporarily closing their group setting programs.

This is leaving thousands of Hoosiers with disabilities in their home settings 24-hours a day – which is exactly where this vulnerable population should be. However, many of these individuals cannot care for their daily needs independently, so the need for in-home care provided by Direct Support Professionals has increased dramatically. These providers were already struggling with a nationwide shortage of DSPs and now the issue is exasperated. The funding for these disability service providers continues to decline, as the needs of the people they serve continue to rise.

Current legislation for COVID-19 relief packages is ambiguous as to how it will support these providers. Lack of funding during this critical time could result in many disability service providers being unable to serve our society's most vulnerable.

I urge you to include Medicaid-funded community supports in COVID-19 packages.

In-home community-based programs will be critical to treat infected patients and slow the spread of COVID-19. To learn more about how you can help advocate to ensure that our nation is caring for those with disabilities visit the American Network of Community Options and Resources at ancor.org. To learn more about Opportunity Enterprises visit oppent.org.

Sincerely,

Neil Samahon
CEO

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