

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

FROM:

LeadingAge Ohio  
Ohio Assisted Living Association  
Ohio Association of Area Agencies on Aging  
Ohio Council for Home Care and Hospice  
Ohio Health Care Association  
Ohio Statewide Independent Living Council

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Aging and Disability Coalition Supports Home and Community-Based Services  
Investments, Parity in Budget Bill

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The above organizations express our thanks to the Senate for its support of home and community-based services in Substitute House Bill 166 released this week with an amendment that will bring parity to the level of investment for older Ohioans and Ohioans with disabilities who are served in their homes and communities as with those served in nursing facilities.

Home and community-based Medicaid waiver programs are cost-effective options for older Ohioans and Ohioans with disabilities to live healthy, engaged, secure lives in their homes and communities. It is where most people want to be. However, our members are experiencing significant challenges in finding personal care aides to provide services in these programs. Providers are dropping out as a result and they are not easily replaced. They face low rates, staffing shortages and economic forces that combine to make the business model unsustainable for them to continue.

Ohio's system is set up for a continuum of care, with the provision of cost effective services at home to assisted living waiver options to full skilled nursing care. However, without the ability to provide personal care services in the community settings because of a lack of providers, eligible participants are turned away or disenrolled, or to immediately go to the full skilled nursing care when that is not necessarily what they need or want.

We also applaud both the House and Senate for recognizing the need for increased investment in PASSPORT personal care aide rates and assisted living waiver rates; this is another good step towards parity. At its current rate of investment in this continuum, Ohio has an unsustainable model for long term services and supports, putting our state's fiscal health and the health of all of us as we age, at great risk. Increased investment, and realignment of Ohio's investment so that we have parity for reimbursement for home and community-based services in line with nursing facilities, are critical initiatives to putting Ohio on the right course.

**Kathryn Brod, President/CEO of LeadingAge Ohio:** “The funding increases to the Assisted Living Waiver and PASSPORT will allow more providers to take advantage of these critical programs. Every individual served in home and community based services is one fewer individual in higher-cost care settings, so the investments that the Senate expanded upon reflect respect for both older Ohioans and for the Ohio taxpayer.”

**Jean Thompson, Executive Director, Ohio Assisted Living Association:** “The ‘Parity Amendment’ is a good idea and the Ohio Assisted Living Association supports it. If this amendment had been in place when the Assisted Living Medicaid Waiver started in 2006, the program would never have gone for 13 years without an increase. The ALW is a perfect example of the need for this amendment for Home & Community Based Services. It begins to put all long-term care services on the same playing field.”

**Larke Recchie, CEO, Ohio Association of Area Agencies on Aging:** “Creating parity among increases for nursing home rates and the rates for personal care in home and community programs such as PASSPORT and Ohio Home Care is essential as we see the need for home care services continuing to increase. We can’t afford to tip the scale for where people get their services in our current tight labor market. We appreciate the Senate’s thoughtful approach to this challenge.”

**Joe Russell, Executive Director, Ohio Council for Home Care and Hospice:** “As our aging population continues to grow and the demand for long-term services increases, the Senate changes will help ensure that more Ohioans have an opportunity to stay home as they age. While more work needs to be done in this area, this is certainly a step in the right direction.”

**Pete Van Runkle, Executive Director, Ohio Health Care Association:** “It’s really important that the Senate, building on what the House did, recognized that the costs of offering home and community-based services to Ohioans continue to go up, especially in this time of workforce shortage. You can’t give people access to these lower-cost, in-demand services if providers can’t afford to operate.”

**Jeremy Morris, Executive Director, Ohio Statewide Independent Living Council:** “Individuals with disabilities have been seeking parity in the rate increases between nursing homes and community-based supports for years. Community-based services and supports are vital to those that want to live independently and remain in the community. This is a step in the right direction to ensure they have access to a stable, reliable, and dedicated staff and providers.”

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