



September 10, 2021

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

Dear Senator Portman,

First, I want to thank you for your years of support and attention to the issues that impact people with disabilities and their families and the providers who support them. Last year we had the honor of hosting you for a town hall zoom meeting with our members, nearly 200 of Ohio's private disability service provider agencies. During this meeting our members shared their challenges recruiting and retaining the frontline workforce needed to provide critical Medicaid supports for Ohioans with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Since then the workforce shortage has exacerbated from crisis to emergency, threatening our members' ability to provide needed services to Ohioans with disabilities.

I am writing you today to express our deep concern about President Biden's announcement yesterday that his administration will be mandating COVID-19 vaccinations for nearly all providers of Medicaid and Medicare services. While we are appreciative of the administration's efforts to increase vaccinations and end the spread of COVID-19, we strongly believe this is the wrong approach and will lead to dire unintended consequences. Our providers have worked tirelessly to keep the people they support and their staff healthy and safe throughout the global pandemic. But in addition to the workforce challenges faced by so many industries, the strain endured by our frontline professionals keeping people healthy has been insurmountable for some and has caused many to leave our field. Those who remain in the system today have been stretched to their limits to ensure adequate staffing levels.

While we know these executive orders are intended to ensure the health and safety of all Americans, we believe it will have the opposite impact on Ohio's most vulnerable citizens.

At this point, we estimate that 45% of our Direct Support Professionals (DSP) have been vaccinated. In recent polls of our members, approximately 20% of DSP in an already dangerously depleted workforce would leave the job immediately if any type of mandate, either for a vaccination or a test, is implemented. The reasons DSPs have for not getting the vaccine are varied; medical conditions, religious beliefs, fear, and personal beliefs. This policy decision further jeopardizes the services to the tens of thousands Ohioans that rely on our system to live their day to day lives.

Let there be no mistake, these mandates will have a catastrophic impact on our ability to support people with developmental disabilities in all of our Medicaid-supported services, including Intermediate Care Facilities and Home and Community Based Supports. DSPs who leave our field for higher paying jobs that do not fall under the scope of the Biden Administration's mandates are not likely to return. Again,



while we share a mission with the Biden administration of keeping our fellow citizens healthy and safe, these mandates indicate that the administration is not considering the current workforce shortages and the immediate impact of its policies.

We look forward to continuing this dialogue and are appreciative of any opportunity to share our workforce challenges with the administration. We are committed to being a partner in any solutions that fight the pandemic, ensure and bolster a qualified and dedicated workforce, and address the needs of Ohioans with disabilities. We appreciate your time and attention and look forward to a continued partnership addressing these critical issues.

Sincerely,

Peter J. Moore

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