



September 10, 2021

Governor Mike DeWine
Vern Riffe Center, 30th Floor
77 South High Street,
Columbus, Ohio, 43215

Dear Governor DeWine,

First, I want to thank you and your administration for the support and attention to the issues that impact Ohioans with intellectual and developmental disabilities, their families and the providers who support them. We are also grateful for your administration's tireless efforts to curb the spread of COVID-19, incentivize vaccination and support Ohio's business community. Our members, nearly 200 of Ohio's private Medicaid-funded developmental disability service provider agencies, are experiencing immense challenges recruiting and retaining the frontline workforce needed to provide critical disability supports. And while we know the workforce shortage impacts many sectors, the workforce challenges have grown from crisis to emergency in our system, threatening our members' ability to provide vital services to Ohioans with disabilities.

I am writing you today to express our deep concern about President Biden's announcement yesterday that his administration would be mandating COVID-19 vaccinations for 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 caused many to leave our field. Those who are staying they 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 discussions with our members it was indicated that approximately 20% of 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. We need these professionals to provide the necessary supports and services to the thousands of people depending on them throughout Ohio.

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 and 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 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,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Peter J. Moore", is written in a cursive style.

Peter J. Moore

President and CEO
Ohio Provider Resource Association
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Columbus, Ohio, 43212