

May 7, 2024

Chair Hoffman, Chair Noor, and Members of the Human Services Appropriations Omnibus Conference Committee:

On behalf of ARRM and our more than 185 provider organizations, thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony to the Human Services Appropriations Omnibus bill.

We want to start by thanking both Chair Hoffman and Chair Noor for their work this session and their dedication to passing meaningful legislation that will support both people with disabilities and their service providers. We are grateful for the time the House and Senate provided ARRM and our members to present our ideas on how to strengthen services that support people with disabilities and enjoyed the thoughtful discussion and questions around the proposals that we brought forward.

We are thrilled to see many of the proposals we brought forward included in the Senate version of the Human Services Omnibus Appropriations bill and would like to highlight those below.

- Article 1, Sections 4 and 5 (SF 5335 3rd Engrossment) would create a licensing moratorium exception for individuals currently living in a 5 or 6-person Supportive Living Facility (SLF) to move into a Community Residential Setting (CRS).
- Article 1, Section 6 (SF 5335 3rd Engrossment) would allow Out-of-Home Respite for children to be provided in an unlicensed setting. Respite is a critical, upstream service that supports families. Without access to reliable and safe respite options, families are turning to alternative placements for their children, including more congregate living settings and even emergency rooms and hospitalization. Allowing this service to be provided in an unlicensed setting will open options for families and increase access and utilization of this critical service.
- Article 1, Section 22 (SF 5335 3rd Engrossment) would amend the direct care compensation thresholds included in the Disability Waiver Rate System (DWRS) that were passed during the 2023 legislative session, allowing providers to count the costs related to supporting someone through assistive technology. ARRM has long been a champion of the use of technology in services for people with disabilities. Remote support and assistive technology have helped homes remain open where due to the staffing shortage they may have been in danger of closure. In addition, these options have supported increased independence and as a result, reliance on caregivers has lessened. The language included in this section helps to remove any potential disincentives or barriers in moving forward with assistive technology.
- Article 1, Section 31 (SF 5335 3rd Engrossment) would create a Family Residential Services Taskforce. ARRM believes that Family Residential Services are an important service option for individuals with disabilities. The new proposed rate tiers that are scheduled to go into effect on

January 1, 2026, will greatly jeopardize the sustainability of these services going forward. Creating this task force and studying the impact of the rates, before they go into effect, is an important first step in ensuring that Family Residential Services remains part of the spectrum of services available to people with disabilities.

- Article 1, Section 35 (SF 5335 3rd Engrossment) would follow a federal rule change in 2020 and allow reimbursement for direct care in hospitals during short-term acute hospital stays. There are notable benefits to allowing waiver services to support individuals during hospital visits, including: more successful and shorter hospital stays, decreased fear and stress from patients, and more direct care learning from hospital staff to support successful transitions out of the hospital. Establishing this essential service is an important step in supporting person-centered care.

We would also like to thank the chairs and highlight language included in both the House and Senate versions of the Human Services Appropriations Omnibus bill.

- Article 1, Section 40 (SF 5335 3rd Engrossment) and Article 1, Section 28 (SF 5335 2nd Unofficial Engrossment) would create own home services provider capacity-building grants. We believe this one-time grant opportunity could set a standard and provide a playbook for individuals and their service providers looking to transition from congregate living settings to an individual's own home. As providers take these grant dollars and develop innovative solutions to support people in their living goals, we can take the learnings and services developed and replicate them across the state.

As the chairs and conference committee members begin developing a final proposal, we hope that the proposals highlighted above, included in the Senate language, will be adopted in the final report.

Thank you again to the chairs and committee members for the opportunity to comment on the Human Services Omnibus Appropriations bill, and for your thoughtful consideration of all the proposals ARRM brought forward this session. We are grateful for the leadership of both chairs in developing meaningful policy changes that impact people with disabilities and their service providers. We look forward to working collaboratively as we move through the remainder of this legislative session.

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