

March 31, 2021

Dear Senator & Representative,

Throughout the pandemic, adult day providers have stretched to reach some of the most vulnerable population served by home and community services. They have mobilized client care and services bringing care to them at home and reduced in-person visits when possible using telehealth. Adult day providers also worked to ensure the psychosocial needs of clients were also addressed throughout the pandemic offering activity classes via Zoom and remote social gatherings. These providers have done a remarkable job continuing to meet their client's health needs during the pandemic and have helped them overcome social isolation. They need support to continue these vital services in the community.

As the clients served by adult day have the opportunity to receive the COVID-19 vaccine, adult day centers are now looking at what the future looks like. With the ability to reach more clients remotely while also preparing for in person care and activities to resume, adult day providers need ongoing resources to meet the needs of those they serve. Without ongoing resources, adult providers may need to cease operations leaving a gap in the service continuum. If these providers close their doors, it is likely that they won't come back. The cost to restart a closed adult day center is prohibitive.

In conversations with DSHS, we have been made aware of their recent letter detailing proposals for utilization of the ARA funds, including the 10 percent increase in federal match specific to HCBS programs, recently designated by Congress. Items such as adult day rate enhancements, innovation funds, and the workforce project, if approved, will help support these programs to continue operating. DSHS has indicated that these funding opportunities will be available to adult day providers. Also, there's a need for an increase in client rates so these programs can keep up with rising staffing, supplies, PPE and other operating costs for program sustainability. Additionally, funding for technology and training is critical to continue to serve vulnerable adults at home through mobile, remote, and telehealth services.

In addition to the above requests, CMS has placed limits on previous funds such as restricting some payments to only 90 days, or requiring providers to have never reduced their workforce during the pandemic. We are asking that the state explore ways for providers to receive funds longer than the current 90-day limitation. These providers need compensation for lost revenue when they were unable to provide services through no fault of their own. Also, adult day providers that needed to reduce staff because of reduced funding should not continue to be penalized for this. As centers work to reopen and rehire staff as well as retain current staff, the added funding is needed to ensure the safety of all staff and clients. Unfairly punishing them for necessary staff reductions will only harm the providers making it harder to reopen and serve those in need of community based care. In the absence of these services, more demand will be placed on higher cost licensed residential care settings, as alternatives.

We understand there are many competing priorities that the state is dealing with in the face of the pandemic. Thank you for considering the needs and safety of Full Life's 383 vulnerable long-term care adult day health clients as well as staff across our three sites that heroically care for them.

Please make funding decisions that return these programs to some sort of 'pre-pandemic' normalcy for the sake of clients who need the services.

Sincerely,