



March 24, 2024

The Honorable Greg Abbott
Governor of Texas
P.O. Box 12428
Austin, Texas 78711-2428

The Honorable Lois Kolkhorst
P.O. Box 12068
Capital Station
Austin, Texas 78711

The Honorable Governor Dan Patrick
Lieutenant Governor of Texas
P.O. Box 12068
Austin, Texas 78711

The Honorable Charles Schwertner
P.O. Box 12068
Capital Station
Austin, Texas 78711

The Honorable Dade Phelan
Speaker, Texas House of Representatives
P.O. Box 2910
Austin, TX 78768

The Honorable Greg Bonnen
P.O. Box 2910
Austin, Texas 78768

The Honorable Brandon Creighton
P.O. Box 12068
Capitol Station
Austin, Texas 78711

The Honorable Mary González
P.O. Box 2910
Austin, Texas 78768

The Honorable Joan Huffman
P.O. Box 12068
Capitol Station
Austin, Texas 78711

The Honorable Morgan Meyer
P.O. Box 2910
Austin, Texas 78768

The Honorable Armando Walle
P.O. Box 2910
Austin, Texas 78768

RE: Emergency Appropriations Request to Increase Wages for Direct Support Professionals

Dear Governor Abbott, Lieutenant Governor Patrick, Speaker Phelan, Senators Creighton, Huffman, Kolkhorst, Schwertner, and Representatives Bonnen, González, Meyer, and Walle:

Thank you for your tireless public service and dedicated leadership to the state of Texas. Today, we bring forth a matter of utmost importance regarding the welfare of the intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) community within our state. It is with a sense of urgency that we implore you, along with your esteemed colleagues in both the Senate and House, to authorize an emergency appropriations request through the Legislative Budget Board (LBB) to elevate the minimum wage for community-based direct support professionals (DSPs) dedicated to the care of individuals with IDD who live in group homes from \$10.60/hour to \$15/hour.

During the 88th Legislative Session, the Legislative Appropriations Request (LAR) submitted by the Health and Human Services (HHS) department lacked a specific allocation for the DSPs responsible for the IDD community. While there was a recognition of the need for increased wages across various sectors, the essential funding required to raise wages to \$15/hour for DSPs providing services in group homes was regrettably absent from the final budget. At a base wage of \$10.60/hour, DSPs face significant financial strain, which jeopardizes the stability of vital IDD programs. In general, provider reimbursement rates have fallen significantly behind inflation over the past 20 years, culminating with COVID and massive inflation from 2020 to present. This is jeopardizing the entire IDD service delivery infrastructure and, most importantly, the safety of the IDD population. Increased operational costs such as rent, insurance, utilities and administrative cost have not been addressed over the past two decades.

The escalating workforce crisis shortage exacerbates concerns as the waitlist for IDD services in Texas continues to grow rapidly. IDD providers will not have an infrastructure to address future recipients coming into the system. With roughly half a million children and adults in Texas living with IDD, the number of individuals who have expressed interest in IDD services has increased in [recent years](#). With insufficient staff to meet the needs of the IDD community, there is an even more urgent need to recruit and retain DSPs to serve Texans with IDD. Furthermore, DSPs at community-based providers outside of state-supported living centers (SSLC) have experienced minimal rate increases over the past 13 years. This chronic underfunding not only threatens the quality of care provided to individuals with IDD but also contributes to the closure of group homes, leaving those in critical need without essential support.

It is imperative to secure competitive wages for DSPs to ensure the continuity of high-quality care for individuals with IDD. While we recognize the magnitude of this request, we firmly believe the unprecedented nature of the situation calls for immediate action. The recent update by Texas Comptroller Glenn Hegar, estimating an \$18 billion surplus by the end of the fiscal year 2024-2025 budget cycle, offers a promising opportunity. Given that Medicaid serves as the primary funding source for these indispensable services, we urge the legislature to allocate emergency funding to address this pressing issue.

The revelation of a surplus budget serves as a beacon of hope for the IDD community and the dedicated DSPs who serve them. It underscores Texas's capacity to demonstrate unwavering commitment to the most vulnerable members of our society. Ultimately, our collective actions in safeguarding the well-being of the IDD community reflect our state's values and moral compass. Thank you for your attention to this critical matter.

Sincerely,

Time to Care: Save Texas Caregivers Now coalition, including:

Providers Alliance for Community Services of Texas (PACSTX)
Private Providers Association of Texas
Texas Council of Community Centers
Rock House
EduCare Community Living

D&S Community Services
Caregiver, Inc.
Hill Resources
Advo Companies, Inc.

Cc:

The Honorable Representative James Frank, Chair, House Committee on Human Services
Sarah Hicks (Office of Governor Greg Abbott)
Mike Morrissey (Office of Lieutenant Governor Dan Patrick)
Andrew Blifford (Office of Speaker of the House Dade Phelan)