



August 7, 2024

Texas Health and Human Services Commission
Attention: Provider Finance Department
Mail Code H-400
P.O. Box 149030
Austin, Texas 78714-9030

Sent via email to: PFD-LTSS@hhs.texas.gov

RE: Public Comment about Biennial Fee Review for Medicaid and Non-Medicaid Payment Rates and Rate Methodologies

Dear Commissioners:

Is there any job you would do for \$10.60/hour? If you had to hire someone to provide essential care for your disabled child or parent, do you think that you could find anyone you could trust for \$10.60/hour?

You know that the answer to both questions is **no**. Not maybe. Not hopefully. It's **no**. Not competing against \$16/hour starting wage (with benefits) at Bill Miller BBQ or Walmart. Therefore, it's unrealistic to expect service providers to somehow magically find thousands of workers willing to accept those rates.

I'm a parent of two significantly developmentally disabled adult daughters who both have HCS waiver funding. My wife and I decided to be CDS Option 1 employers so that we could pay well enough to get quality supports for our daughters. At my current max pay rate for PAS HAB of \$21.15/hour I still have a challenge finding reliable, caring, dedicated workers. And we're only staffing 8am-4pm, not overnight awake staff. At \$10.60/hour it would be impossible.

Texas needs to recognize we live in a post-Covid economy now and use a rate calculation methodology that reflects the real-world wage competition faced by providers and employers. Failure to do so is destabilizing the service system, which compromises the safety and well-being of individuals who rely on these services.

More than 230 group homes have closed in the last 12 months and more are expected to close because the math doesn't work. Where do you think those residents end up when their home closes? Nursing homes. Their parent's couches. Jail. The streets. Is that the future HHSC and the State of Texas want for their most vulnerable citizens? I hope not. Fixing it is within your reach. You just need to demonstrate the will to do it.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Mark L. Olson'.

Mark L. Olson, President & CEO
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Boerne, TX 78006-3340