



Hon. Jordan A. Harris
512E Main Capitol Building
P.O. Box 202186
Harrisburg, PA 17120-2186

Hon. Seth M. Grove
245 Main Capitol Building
P.O. Box 202196
Harrisburg, PA 17120-2196

Senator Scott Martin
Senate Box 203013
Harrisburg, PA 17120-3013

Senator Vincent Hughes
Senate Box 203007
Harrisburg, PA 17120-3007

Dear Chairman Harris and Republican Chair Grove, and Chair Martin and Minority Chair Hughes,

We are leaders of the Autism Society of America's affiliates across the state of Pennsylvania. The Autism Society and our nationwide network of affiliates, connects people to resources they need through education, advocacy, support, information and referral, and community programming. In Pennsylvania, we provide support for the thousands of individuals and families living with Autism throughout the state. We offer a variety of services such as support groups, referrals, events, first responder and advocacy trainings. One of the most significant difficulties our families are facing relates to the care crisis.

That is why we are so glad to hear of Governor Shapiro's budget request to reduce the home and community-based services (HCBS) waitlist and increase rates for direct service professionals. HCBS allows individuals with disabilities to live and engage in their community. There are currently over 14,000 individuals on the waiting list for HCBS. The Pennsylvania Department of Human Services says of these 14,000, over 4,000 are in the emergency category, meaning they are in desperate need of services. Governor Shapiro's request would provide a historic \$340 million in funding to provide at least half of those in the emergency category with essential services.

The Governor's budget recognizes the state cannot just provide funding to reduce the waitlists without also investing in the providers and direct support workers. There is a huge shortage of providers and direct support workers to provide the essential services to individuals with Autism and other disabilities. Therefore, the budget request includes an extra \$216 million in state aid, or 12% more, to boost worker salaries and help agencies fill open positions. Federal matching dollars brings the total to about \$480 million. This will help to increase the salaries of thousands of direct support professionals.

As you continue to negotiate the budget for Fiscal Year 2025, we urge you to include the Governor's funding request for the HCBS system. This historic funding would ensure that



thousands of Pennsylvanians can live and contribute to their community and help the state economy.

Sincerely,

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