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Testimony for a Joint Informational Meeting of the House Human Services Committee and the House Aging & Older Adult Services Committee

*October 4, 2023*

Ladies and gentlemen of the Pennsylvania House Human Services Committee and of the House Aging and Older Adult Services Committee.

Today, I stand before you as a dedicated personal care home provider with 23 years of experience, representing the countless individuals who are the very heart and soul of our great state. The personal care homes in Philadelphia County, like mine, are essential lifelines for a significant portion of our population—those who have been deemed by physicians to be unable to live independently due to their behavioral health conditions, requiring round-the-clock care and assistance with their Activities of Daily Living (ADLs) and Instrumental Activities of Daily Living (IADLs).

Let me begin by emphasizing a stark reality: these residents can only afford to pay between \$27 and \$48 a day for housing and food. Yet, we, as personal care home providers, have never received fair compensation for the life-saving services we provide. Today, I implore you to consider the dire need for an increase in our reimbursement rates. Our situation is unique; we not only provide care but must also shoulder the costs of food, utilities, and infrastructure repairs which home care agencies do not.

It's crucial to acknowledge the valiant efforts of our direct care workers. They are the backbone of our personal care homes, and they deserve more than just our appreciation; they deserve a living wage and benefits. By increasing our rates, we can ensure that these dedicated individuals receive the compensation they deserve for the demanding and compassionate work they perform daily.

Now, let's consider the broader implications of this issue. First and foremost, the increase in reimbursement rates for personal care homes can significantly alleviate the burden on taxpayers when it comes to incarceration costs. By providing appropriate care in our homes, we can

prevent individuals with behavioral health issues from becoming involved in the criminal justice system.

Furthermore, the cost of institutional care is staggering. Personal care homes offer a more cost-effective alternative to costly institutions while maintaining the dignity and comfort of those we serve.

Inpatient psychiatric care is another area where our services can make a substantial difference. By providing specialized care in our homes, we can reduce the need for expensive psychiatric hospitalizations, ultimately saving the state valuable Medicaid dollars.

The devastation of homelessness on individuals and the cities they inhabit cannot be overstated. Personal care homes offer a safe haven for those who would otherwise be left without shelter or support.

By adequately compensating us, we can expand our capacity to care for the unhoused behavioral health citizens, reducing the strain on city resources and enhancing the overall well-being of our communities.

In conclusion, I urge you to recognize the urgency of increasing reimbursement rates for personal care homes in Pennsylvania, especially in Philadelphia County. By doing so, we not only honor the dedication of our direct care workers but also create a ripple effect that touches the lives of countless individuals, eases the financial burden on the state, and contributes to the health, safety, and welfare of our most vulnerable population. Together, we can make a profound difference in the lives of those who need it most. Thank you.