

House Human Services Committee
The Pennsylvania Office of Developmental Programs: Proposal for Performance-
Based Contracting Waiver

Written Remarks by G. N. Janes, Valley Community Services
Chief Executive Officer
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Good morning, Chairman Kinsey, Chairman Heffley, and members of the Human Services Committee. Thank you for listening to my testimony. My name is G. N. Janes and I am the Chief Executive Officer of Valley Community Services, a mid-sized nonprofit that provides supports to Pennsylvanians with intellectual disabilities and autism across eleven counties. Our program ranges in intensity from minimal supports for people living independently to intensive systems for people who have a complex medical or behavioral need. We employ close to 500 people across the commonwealth. For years, our organization has struggled to maintain a full complement of experienced staff because reimbursement rates did not adequately compensate for the staffing and administrative supports that our system requires. The pandemic furthered that struggle to a critical level that my organization has yet to recover from.

I applaud the proposed investment in the reimbursement rates and regulatory oversight, as they are an important first step to our system's long-term sustainability. Valley Community Services welcomes a time when we will be evaluated on positive outcomes for the people we support, rather than via the lowest common denominator of licensing inspections. Performance Based Contracting could be that bridge to a system that puts people before units. Pennsylvania is at the vanguard of a system that can place the person served at the forefront. Decisionmakers at the Department of Human Services and the Office of Developmental Programs can, and should, be lauded for their commitment to a sustainable system that addresses longstanding shortcomings that states across the country are struggling with.

My caveat is that we must take great care to foster a set of quality measures that make sense for the Pennsylvanians supported by our intellectual disabilities and autism system, and one that ensures a vibrant provider community that has a hand in implementing them. Quality measures must be backed by empirical data points that demonstrate positive, inclusive, outcomes that residential providers understand and can implement with their finite resources.

The proposed ODP budget takes a welcome first step in addressing decades of underfunding. Providers have historically spent most of their capital investing in wages of their Direct Support Professionals, the backbone of our system. As such, providers, especially smaller organizations, have very little cash on-hand to invest in the infrastructure necessary to be successful in Performance Based Contracting. Similarly, this system that has been underfunded and in need of cash investments, lacks the luxury of investing those finite resources into policy shifts without the full picture of its implementation and operation.

I would warn our state partners that an unintended consequence of overly rapid and ambitious system reform could result in provider deserts, where rural communities lack the same variety of choice and

quality that larger areas enjoy. One needs only to look toward the physical health space, where consolidation has resulted in disparate hospital systems and health outcomes, based on proximity to large urban areas. We must learn from these disparities and seek not to repeat them in our own space.

I come here to praise the Office of Developmental Programs, not to bury it. The staff are proposing a revolutionary means with which to reward organizations who adhere to the "Everyday Lives" principles that are the foundation of our system. They deserve the national plaudits and attention they are already receiving. However, being the first state to implement a system such as this, across a community as large as ours, requires intentional, cautious movements forward, lest the law of unintended consequences creates a system where less Pennsylvanians, not more, are supported.

Respectfully submitted by:

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