



IAHHC

Indiana Association for Home & Hospice Care

July 28, 2020

Via E-Mail

The Honorable Eric Holcomb
Office of the Governor
200 W Washington St
Indianapolis, IN 46204

Re: Additional Actions to Protect Medically Fragile Children and Adults

Dear Governor Holcomb,

The Indiana Association for Home and Hospice Care (IAHHC) is the trade association representing providers of Home Care services to Hoosiers. IAHHC members include Hospices, Personal Services Agencies, and Home Health Agencies. With over 200 Home Health agencies as members, IAHHC advocates on behalf of the agencies providing and patients receiving these important services that allow Hoosiers to remain in the home – the less costly and preferred option.

We are joined in this correspondence by member organizations that provide specialty care to some of our most vulnerable Hoosiers. These patients are medically fragile and some of the highest risk to COVID-19. Without Home Health agencies serving them and providing long-duration nursing care, they would likely be institutionalized.

As the trade association representing these Home Health Agencies that serve the Medicaid populations through private duty nursing extended shift care, we applaud your administration, specifically the Family and Social Services Administration (FSSA), for the actions it has taken in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. We also appreciate your commitment to removing barriers to care. This includes allowing supervisory visits to be conducted using tele-technologies. However, at the time of this writing, only Nursing Homes have received any additional financial support from the state.

We encourage FSSA to be given authority to take additional measures to support all of Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS), and Home Health specifically. Medicaid consumers, those at home and in the community in particular, will disproportionately suffer the impact of the continued spread of COVID-19. By virtue of their medical vulnerability and economic insecurity, Medicaid consumers will be among those most harmed by both the virus's disease burden and mitigation efforts like self-quarantining. But our industry needs additional support in order to address pre-existing capacity issues that have been exacerbated by the pandemic.

Already, Home Health reimbursement rates are inadequate and providers are unable to compete for and retain the highly skilled nurses needed to care for Hoosiers in their homes. Recruitment and retention have been especially difficult over the last few years, but the pandemic has increased this difficulty considerably.

Medicaid-based Home Health Agencies rely on state funding to cover all agency costs. These costs include personal protective equipment (PPE), caregiver wages, training, benefits, and supplies. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, providers are spending more money than ever to protect our patients and staff, yet we receive the same reimbursement in place prior to the emergency declaration.

Your office indicated that the state of Indiana was allocated over \$2.6 billion in CARES Act funding. We ask that FSSA be given authorization to use a portion of funds available to increase reimbursement rates at least temporarily during the emergency declaration for Medicaid Home Health providers. Specifically, IAHHHC asks that FSSA temporarily increase the State Plan hourly rates to the same level as the Waiver rates in order to stabilize the industry during this unprecedented time. The waiver rates were a product of a detailed actuarial analysis, which Home Health Agencies participated in, and the waiver program serves a very similar population within its respite programs.

North Carolina, Arkansas, and Massachusetts have already instituted temporary rate increases to allow Home Health providers to cover increased costs associated with COVID-19. This has been essential for providers to provide care in this new, higher risk, and more costly environment. This financial support has been vital in allowing Medicaid Home-based providers to remain sustainable and continue serving the state's most vulnerable populations.

We thank you for your consideration and for the essential work that you are already doing during this crisis. We welcome and look forward to further discussion. Please contact us through the Indiana Association for Home and Hospice Care, via the following email address: evan@iahhc.org.

Cc:

Director Al Hubbard (Ret.), Senator Luke Kenley (Ret.), Ryan Kitchell, Former Director, Office of Management and Budget, Kristin Marcuccili, Lieutenant Governor Becky Skillman (Ret.), Senator Vaneta Becker, Senator John Ruckelshaus, Representative Tim Brown, Senator Ed Charbonneau

Respectfully,



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