

Laura Lear
CEO, Community Support Services, Inc.
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Good afternoon. My name is Laura Lear and I am the CEO for Community Support Services, a nonprofit agency providing services to children and adults with developmental disabilities.

Last year, I spoke to you about our recovery efforts after the three year period of pandemic related changes. CSS and the developmental disabilities community is in a far better place today, after a year of restoring services, building the workforce, and transitioning to a new funding system. CSS fully transitioned to the LTSS billing system in October of 2023, and continues to focus on assessing the impact of new rates for new models of service while implementing new billing procedures. New individuals have entered services including transitioning youth and others have successfully moved into residential support services. CSS, as well as other service providers in the county, have put additional resources into the administrative structure necessary to manage the ever changing DDA funding and service delivery requirements. The outcomes experienced by individuals supported and the actual financial impact of the changes will be more fully understood in FY 25.

CSS is preparing for future expansion to meet the needs of Montgomery County citizens with developmental disabilities. Facility space in Gaithersburg is being renovated to house therapeutic services including psychology and nursing, assistive technology services, space for recreational and vocational instruction, and space to interact with peers to pursue self-advocacy interests and to develop communication strategies. The facility will include space for new hire orientation training classes and ongoing workforce development functions. CSS has increased its direct support professional workforce by 5.7% over the last year, including employees hired through Governor Moore's Maryland Corps and Service Year Option program, and DSP wages have increased 7.1% over the last year. An increase in the number of children funded through the autism waiver and adults funded through DDA is expected as the state implements the "End the Wait" initiative, and CSS will be ready to meet the need in Montgomery county.

The county has provided a match to the state funds received by DDA service providers, called the DD supplement, for over thirty years. The supplement is vital to provider agencies, as state funding is not adequate in our county, where minimum wage, housing and other costs of doing business exceed other areas of the state. Our value in the service to this community is clear as person centered services enable individuals with developmental disabilities to live and work as included members of their

community, their family members are able to work and care for all their children, and we bring nearly 300 million dollars each year from the state into the county. The DD supplement has facilitated the development of a wide range of innovative services in Montgomery County. The DD supplement is truly a win:win.

We are asking that the DD supplement be increased by at least 4.5% for FY 25. This increase includes funding for new individuals entering the DDA system as well as supporting the ever increasing cost of living. I urge you to increase the DD supplement by at least 4.5% and support providers, staff and citizens with developmental disabilities. Thank you.