

April 9th, 2026

Dear Council Members,

My name is Sandra Rouse, RN, and I am the owner of Sandra's Nursing. I am also a proud member of The Arc Montgomery Respite Consortium, providing respite services to caregivers supporting seniors, children, and adults with disabilities throughout Montgomery County.

Through my work, I see firsthand the life-sustaining, preventative impact that respite care has on families. Today, I am here to express serious concerns regarding both the proposed limitation of respite services to 120 hours per year and the current reimbursement rate of \$33 per hour.

Limiting respite services to 120 hours annually would significantly undermine the effectiveness of the program. Many caregivers rely on consistent, ongoing support to manage the physical, emotional, and financial demands of caregiving. A strict annual cap would place additional strain on families already experiencing high levels of stress, increasing the risk of caregiver burnout, declining health, and preventable crises that ultimately lead to higher public system costs.

This impact is especially significant for families caring for children with autism and other developmental disabilities. These children often require caregivers with specialized training, including qualified Behavior Technicians who understand behavioral support, safety protocols, crisis prevention, and individualized care plans. Maintaining a workforce with this level of expertise is critical to ensuring safe, effective, and appropriate respite services.

However, the current reimbursement rate of \$33 per hour does not reflect the true cost of providing this level of care. In fact, my agency's current rate for comparable services already exceeds the County's respite rate due to increased wages, training requirements, and operational expenses. This gap makes it extremely difficult to continue providing respite services under the current structure without subsidizing care at a loss.

Recent and upcoming minimum wage increases in Montgomery County, combined with rising operational costs, including staffing, mandatory training, insurance, background checks, licensing, and administrative compliance, have significantly increased the cost-of-service delivery. Without an increase in the respite reimbursement rate, agencies struggle to recruit and retain qualified caregivers and behavior Technicians, placing both workforce stability and service quality at risk.

Respite providers remain deeply committed to serving families and caregivers in our community. However, without a reimbursement rate that reflects current market realities and the true cost of care, many agencies may be forced to reduce services, limit access, or discontinue participation in respite programs altogether—directly impacting the families who depend on these services the most.

To help ensure continued access to qualified, reliable caregivers, I respectfully request:

- An adjustment to the respite reimbursement rate to \$38 per hour, and
- Reconsideration of the proposed 120-hour annual cap, in favor of 144 hours per year, allowing families to receive a consistent 12 hours of respite per month throughout the fiscal year.

These changes are not increases for excess, but necessary adjustments to maintain program viability. They would help stabilize the provider network, support fair wages for skilled care professionals, and ensure children with autism, individuals with disabilities, seniors, and their caregivers across Montgomery County continue to receive essential respite services that prevent burnout and promote long-term caregiving success.

Thank you for your time, thoughtful consideration, and continued commitment to individuals with disabilities, seniors, and the families who support them.

Sandra Rouse, BSN, RN  
Owner,

Sandra's Nursing Services, LLC