

## Dear Council Members,

My name is Abby Sakariya, FNP-C, and I am the Founder and CEO of Cherished Hands Home Health Care. I am also a proud member of The Arc Montgomery Respite Consortium, providing respite services to caregivers who support seniors and children and adults with disabilities in Montgomery County.

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

Limiting respite services to 120 hours annually would significantly impact families and reduce the overall effectiveness of respite care. Many caregivers rely on consistent, ongoing support to manage the physical, emotional, and financial demands of caregiving. A strict cap on hours 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 result in higher system costs.

In addition, recent and upcoming minimum wage increases in Montgomery County—combined with rising operational costs such as staffing, training, insurance, background checks, and administrative compliance—have significantly increased the cost of delivering high-quality home-based and respite services. These pressures make it increasingly difficult for provider agencies to sustain services at the current reimbursement rate while maintaining workforce stability, appropriate training standards, and quality of care.

Respite providers remain deeply committed to serving families and caregivers in our community. However, without reimbursement that reflects the true cost of care—and without sufficient authorized hours—many agencies may be forced to reduce services or limit access for the families who rely on respite the most.

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

- An adjustment to the respite reimbursement rate to **\$36 per hour**, and
- Reconsideration of the proposed 120-hour annual cap in favor of **144 hours per year**, which would allow families to receive a consistent 12 hours of respite per month throughout the fiscal year.

These modest but critical adjustments would help stabilize the provider network, support fair wages for direct care workers, and ensure that families across Montgomery County continue to have access to essential respite services that prevent burning out and promote long-term caregiving success.

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