

December 14, 2020

Kristin Ahrens, Deputy Secretary  
Office of Developmental Programs  
Department of Human Services  
502 Health and Welfare Building  
625 Forster Street  
Harrisburg, PA 17105

Dear Kristin:

First, I wanted to clearly state the appreciation of RCPA and its members for all that you and ODP have been doing for providers, and the consumers and families they serve during these difficult times. Your continued availability and transparency are also noted.

I am writing about one specific issue among many: the significant and unprecedented hardship that community participation services (CPS) providers are experiencing at this time. I could review the issues in detail; however, I believe you know the issues well. You also know that during this crisis, the retainer payments were a critical lifeline to these providers for continuing any outreach to consumers and families. These payments came concurrently with federal relief such that these payments to providers were not “state-only” funds.

As we are now in December, we have raised to you whether another critical round of retainer payments are available. This would literally allow programs to remain in any – even partial – operation. In our call earlier this week, you noted that while “technically” the mechanism for retainer payments would be possible with state-only dollars, that the funds were not really available due to other expenses (e.g., increased residential services at this time), and wondered whether the administration/legislature would want to spend state dollars without any federal involvement.

These issues are real, and again we appreciate your openness in discussion the matter. However, in representing the CPS providers, we have to go on record that the time for immediate and urgent action is upon us. Without state relief there will be closures and they will be permanent. This critical aspect of service to individuals with disabilities will forever be lost as we rebuild the system in the future. I urge you to revisit this issue and reconsider whether any state-only relief can be made available while we all wait for an additional federal package.

Thank you.

Sincerely,



Richard S. Edley, PhD  
President and CEO

cc: Clarke Madden, Executive Deputy Secretary, DHS  
Drew Wilburne, Director of Intergovernmental Affairs, DHS