Workforce Crisis Threatening the Human Services Safety Net

The human services industry is facing the largest workforce shortage in its history. State contracted rates with salary benchmarks far below market value, in addition to a tight labor market, increased wages in other sectors, and staggering inflation have led to:

• An average of 27% staff vacancy rates (some agencies more than 40%) according to ADDP’s most recent provider survey,

• Waitlists for approximately 3,000 adults with I/DD to return to their pre-COVID day services, and

• Waitlists for thousands of newly eligible individuals to receive services.

Investing in the Human Services Workforce

ADDP appreciates the ongoing collaboration with the administration and its state agencies, the legislature, and key stakeholders to address the workforce crisis. The most recent $225M “bridge” investment for Chapter 257 services in the economic development bill (line item 1599-6066) is critical to restore the human services safety net service delivery system in FY24 to its pre-pandemic levels until wages can be raised by EOHHS in the long-term. Chapter 268, An Act Relating to Economic Growth and Relief for the Commonwealth, include a reserve to increase staff payments of direct care, front-line, and medical and clinical staff in FY’23 and require EOHHS to develop methodology to increase rates for service providers at a sustainable level above the 50th percentile (currently at 53rd) of the Massachusetts Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS-MA) benchmarks beginning in FY24.


2 Comprised of ADDP, Association of Behavioral Healthcare, Children’s League, and Providers’ Council representing 185,000 human services professionals.

Realizing Equity and Economic Justice

COVID magnified systemic racial, gender and ableism inequalities that pre-existed the pandemic—that reality is stark in human services. People with disabilities and the people who support them were already marginalized and had little political power. The direct support workforce is made up of predominantly female, non-white, and foreign-born professionals working two or three jobs only to find themselves at or below the poverty line. Economic justice for this workforce is long overdue.

ADDP FY’24 Budget Priorities

1 ADDP’s top budget priority is to ensure human service organizations are able to offer competitive salaries to maintain safety net services. In conjunction with The Collaborative, to ensure rates adequately consider inflation and increasing costs, all salaries should be benchmarked to at least the 75th percentile of the BLS-MA index (Chapter 257 and the Human Service Reserve line item 1599-6903).

2 ADDP requests the legislature support House One investment of $200M for Day Habilitation and Adult Day Health programs (line items 4000-0601, 4000-0700, and 4000-0500). This investment will increase rates and ensure the continued operation of two MassHealth LTSS fee-for-service day programs, Day Habilitation and Adult Day Health. Sustaining these programs will help individuals with complex medical and/or behavior support needs to return to their entitlement service.

3 ADDP requests an additional $5.6M for the DDS Community Day/Work line item (5920-2025) to support 450 individuals with complex medical and/or behavior support needs who have not returned to their former day service. Thousands of individuals (most have complex medical and/or behavior needs) have gone without any day service for three years.