

July 6, 2021

Mr. Stephen Groff, Director
Division of Medicaid & Medical Assistance
Department of Health and Social Services
1901 N. Du Pont Highway, Lewis Bldg.
New Castle, DE 19720

RE: Delaware State Spending Plan – American Rescue Plan Act of 2021, Section 9817

Dear Director Groff:

On behalf of KenCrest, thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the Delaware state spending plan for the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021, Section 9817. The American Rescue Plan included a temporary 10% increase to the Federal Medical Assistance Percentage (FMAP) for home and community-based services (HCBS). This enhanced funding provides a unique opportunity to address the significant challenges within the intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) services system.

KenCrest is an HCBS provider for people with I/DD and their families throughout the age continuum—from newborns to senior adults in Delaware, Pennsylvania, and Connecticut. KenCrest has a history of passionate advocacy for people with disabilities and the Direct Support Professional (DSP) workforce.

Delaware should prioritize the enhanced HCBS funding to address the direct care workforce crisis, which has reached unprecedented and catastrophic levels. Although temporary, the increased FMAP funding provides the state with the opportunity to be creative and innovative in its approach to address the challenges of high turnover and high vacancy rates. To address the DSP workforce crisis and improve services for people with I/DD in Delaware, we recommend using the enhanced funds for the following:

- Support provider workforce expansion with funding to issue sign-on and retention bonuses for DSPs.
- Provide incentives to invest in alternative service models, such as Lifesharing and supported independent living. These are lower-cost models that require less direct care staff and promote independence. To transition to these models successfully, providers need financial assistance to alleviate administrative burdens and transition costs.
- Invest in assistive and enabling technology to reduce reliance on 24-hour care, which would help alleviate the workforce crisis and increase independence.
- Provide additional funding for respite services for caregivers and families.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide comments and suggestions on Delaware's state spending plan for the enhanced HCBS funding. If you have any questions on these comments, please contact Government Relations Strategist, Maureen Quinn Yamamoto, at Maureen.Quinn.Yamamoto@kencrest.org. We look forward to working together ensure that Delawareans with disabilities have access to high-quality, meaningful, and person-centered supports and services.

Sincerely,



President & CEO, KenCrest