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Media Contact:

Ross Musick

Disability Rights Ohio

614-466-7264, ext. 108

rmusick@disabilityrightsohio.org

**Over 50 Organizations and Individuals Send Letter to Governor DeWine Advocating for Expanded HCBS Services**

*Advocates express need to expand of in-home care for older adults and people with disabilities as long-term care facilities struggle to combat COVID-19.*

Columbus, Ohio, (Sept. 23XX, 2020)—Last week, 49 organizations and 4 individuals sent a letter to Governor DeWine advocating asking for improved access tofor home and community-based services (HCBS) in Ohio. Advocates believe that support for HCBS from the DeWine administration and General Assembly is critically needed as Ohio continues to battle the COVID-19 pandemic and our service systems continue to struggle.

The letter outlines four areas of focus to strengthen HCBS in Ohio: expanding transitions from long-term care facilities to the community, identifying those most at-risk of institutionalization, preventing a reduction in individual services, and supporting and bolstering provider and workforce capacity.

Advocates emphasize that it’s not enough to simply maintain HCBS funding in the next biennial budget. “It is critical for older adults and people with disabilities that we take action, expanding investing in these services for to all who need them” says Jeremy Morrisordan Ballinger, ExecutivePolicy Director at Disability Rights Ohiothe Ohio Statewide Independent Living Council.

Over 2/3 of COVID-19 deaths have occurred in long-term care facilities and it is more important than ever for Ohio to maintain and invest in the HCBS system. However, historicallyHistorically, however, there has been inadequate funding for transitions, in-home care, support professionals, and community providers. This brings dangerous consequences for the individual, and overburdens long-term care facilities.

The authors of the letter include well-known advocates that work in all areas of the HCBS system in Ohio: Disability Rights Ohio, Ohio Association of Area Agencies on Aging, Ohio Statewide Independent Living Council, Ohio Developmental Disabilities Council, and Ohio Council for Home Care and Hospice.

You can read the advocates’ letter [here](https://www.disabilityrightsohio.org/assets/documents/ohio-hcbs-letter.pdf).

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**About Disability Rights Ohio:** Disability Rights Ohio is the federally and state designated Protection and Advocacy System and Client Assistance Program for the state of Ohio. The mission of Disability Rights Ohio is to advocate for the human, civil and legal rights of people with disabilities in Ohio. Disability Rights Ohio provides legal advocacy and rights protection to a wide range of people with disabilities. Find more information at [www.disabilityrightsohio.org](http://www.disabilityrightsohio.org).

**About the Ohio Statewide Independent Living Council:** The Ohio Statewide Independent Living Council (Ohio SILC) is a federally mandated board for the State of Ohio. The Ohio SILC is responsible for the development, implementation, and monitoring of the State Plan for Independent Living, a three-year strategic plan for Ohio to work towards goals of greater access, inclusion and independence for individuals with disabilities. Find more information at [www.ohiosilc.org](http://www.ohiosilc.org).

**About the Ohio Council for Home Care and Hospice:** Established in 1965, the Ohio Council for Home Care & Hospice (OCHCH) is a non-profit association that represents the interests of health care at home providers in Ohio. OCHCH advocates for ethical, compassionate, and quality home and community-based care, as well as for the individuals and families our members serve. As the voice of health care at home, we strive to provide value, resources, and partnership for those who provide care for our most vulnerable citizens. Find more information at [www.ochch.org](%22http://).

**About the Ohio Developmental Disabilities Council:** The Ohio Developmental Disabilities Council is one of a national network of state councils, committed to self-determination and community inclusion for people with developmental disabilities. The Council’s mission is to create change that improves independence, productivity and inclusion for people with developmental disabilities and their families in community life in Ohio. Find more information at [ddc.ohio.gov](https://ddc.ohio.gov).

**About the Ohio Association of Area Agencies on Aging:** O4A is a nonprofit, statewide network of agencies that provide services for older Ohioans, people with disabilities and their families. The Association engages in national and statewide advocacy to address issues which have an impact on the aging and disability network and older Ohioans and people with disabilities, provides services to members, and serves as a collective voice for Ohio’s Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs). Find more information at [www.ohioaging.org](%22http://).