

April 17, 2024

Chair Hoffman and Members of the Human Services Committee:

On behalf of ARRM and our more than 185 provider organizations, thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in support of SF 5335, the Human Services Omnibus Appropriations bill.

We want to start by thanking the Chair and committee members for their work this session. We are grateful for the time this committee provided ARRM and our members to present our ideas on how to strengthen services that support people with disabilities and enjoyed the thoughtful discussion and questions around the proposals that we brought forward.

We are thrilled to see the Human Services Omnibus Appropriations bill contains many of the provisions ARRM brought forward or supported this session.

First, we want to thank the Chair for including ARRM's proposal to allow Out-of-Home Respite for children to be provided in an unlicensed setting (Article 1, Sections 4 and 5). Respite is a critical, upstream service that supports families. Without access to reliable and safe Respite options, families are turning to alternative placements for their children, including more congregate living settings and even emergency rooms and hospitalization. Allowing this service to be provided in an unlicensed setting will open options for families and increase access and utilization of this critical service.

We are also grateful for the language included in Article 1, Section 15 which would allow providers to count the costs related to supporting someone through assistive technology towards the new direct care compensation threshold in the Disability Waiver Rate System (DWRS). ARRM has long been a champion of the use of technology in services for people with disabilities. Remote supports and assistive technology have helped homes remain open where due to the staffing shortage they may have been in danger of closure. In addition, these options have supported increased independence and as a result, reliance on caregivers has lessened. The language included in this section helps to remove any potential disincentives or barriers in moving forward with assistive technology.

Another important provision in the bill that we would like to highlight is the creation of a Family Residential Services Taskforce (Article 1, Section 22). ARRM believes that Family Residential Services are an important service option that individuals with disabilities can make. The new proposed rate tiers that are scheduled to go into effect on January 1, 2026, will greatly jeopardize the sustainability of these services going forward. Creating this task force and



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studying the impact of the rates, before they go into effect, is an important first step in ensuring that Family Residential Services remains part of the spectrum of services available to people with disabilities.

We would also like to highlight the important provision included in Article 1, Section 25, allowing for direct care in hospitals during short-term acute hospital stays. There are notable benefits to allowing waiver services to support individuals during hospital visits, including: more successful and shorter hospital stays, decreased fear and stress from patients, and more direct care learning from hospital staff to support successful transitions out of the hospital. Establishing this essential service is an important step in supporting person-centered care.

Finally, we want to thank the Chair for including funding for the Own Home services provider capacity-building grants (Article 1, Section 29). We believe that this one-time grant could set that standard and provide a playbook for individuals and their service providers looking to transition from congregate living settings to an individual's own home. As providers take these grant dollars and develop innovative solutions to support people in their living goals, we can take the learnings and services developed and replicate them across the state.

Thank you again to the Chair and committee members for the opportunity to provide comments on the Human Services Omnibus Appropriations bill, and for your thoughtful consideration of all the proposals ARRM brought forward this session. We are grateful for the leadership of the Chair and committee members in developing meaningful policy changes that impact people with disabilities and their service providers. We look forward to working collaboratively as we move through the rest of the session.

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