Date: 02/17/2020

To: Health and Human Services Blue Ribbon Commission

From: Thomas H. Weaver

RE: Public Comment: DWRS Transition Grants

Blue Ribbon Commission,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed Cost Savings Strategies you have identified. Specifically, I would like to comment on Strategy No. 10: “Discontinue Grant Programs.”

Strategy 10 proposes to end two grant programs that the Commission describes as “no longer needed.” One of those grant programs is the Disability Waiver Rate System (DWRS) Transition Grant, and I would like to assure the Commission that the DWRS Transition Grants are still very much needed.

Achieve Services is one of just a few programs that are eligible for the DWRS Transition Grants. The grants are targeted to helping those programs being hit the hardest by the DWRS. To be eligible, a program must be losing at least 15% and at least $300,000 of its rate revenue when the DWRS rates are fully implemented – which is happening in 2020. Eligible programs must also be serving at least 100 waivered service recipients.

Achieve Services serves 195 adults with I/DD, and we have more than 100 on our waiting lists. Moreover, as the DWRS rates are fully implemented in 2020, Achieve is projected to lose more than $560,000 in revenue compared to 2019. 2020 is the year of “rolling implementation” as service agreements are renewed, so 2021 will be the first full year with the new rates, and our revenue loss in that year is projected to exceed $800,000.

Over the past several years, Achieve has taken a number of steps to reduce this anticipated funding gap, including:

• We increased our fundraising from $95,000 in 2013 to more than $400,000 in 2019, and we reduced our reliance on waiver funding from 90% to 79% during that time;
• We’ve created an endowment and a transition reserve;
• We’ve increased our grant revenue;
• We launched Achieve Clean, and laundry detergent company creating jobs and revenue for the people we serve; and
• We’ve achieved significant reductions in transportation and other overhead costs.

Despite the steps we’ve taken to close the funding gap, the magnitude of the shortfall required the creation of this short-term Transition Grant program, and it remains an essential component of our transition to a long-term sustainable business model. And, in addition to the grant dollars, the Transition Grant program also includes technical assistance from DHS to help programs like Achieve develop sustainable business models that do not require additional assistance beyond the life of this 2-year grant program.
Clearly the legislature and Governor saw a need for this legislation last spring when the Transition Grants were enacted, and in the meantime, nothing has changed to mitigate the need for the Grants. The Grants are still very much necessary. Accordingly, on behalf of Achieve and the 195 people we are privileged to serve, I respectfully request that the Commission remove the DWRS Transition Grant from it’s list of proposed Cost Savings Strategies.

Best Regards,

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