

IARF Member Template Letter to Deputy Governor Grace Hou and GOMB Director Alexis Sturm:

The following is a template for members to complete and send directly to key staff in the Governor's office that will have input/oversight into the FY25 introduced budget. Deputy Governor Grace Hou is to be considered the top official in the Governor's office on health and human service issues. GOMB Director Alexis Sturm runs the Office of Management & Budget, which finalizes the introduced budgets.

Below are the contact emails:

Grace Hou

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Alexis Sturm

Alexis.sturm@illinois.gov

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Deputy Governor
Office of Governor
JB Pritzker
555 W. Monroe, 16th Floor
Chicago, IL 62706

Alexis Sturm
Director
Governor's Office of
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555 W. Monroe, Ste 1500
Chicago, IL 62706

RE: Stop Elimination of Direct Support Professional Hours for Persons with Disabilities

Deputy Governor Hou and Director Sturm:

On behalf of EP!C Inc., the 500+ individuals and families we serve, and 210 staff we employ, I reach out to you today with grave concerns over proposals from the Department of Human Services Division of Developmental Disabilities (DHS-DDD) that will negatively impact our ability to meet our mission of service to our communities.

In November 2023, DHS-DDD outlined proposals to the *Ligas* Rates Oversight Committee that would result in eliminating 2.5 million Direct Support Professional (DSP) funded hours from the community-integrated living arrangement (CILA) service array. This proposal represents a reduction of 9% of total funded hours in CILA, would lead to a reduction in funded hours for 90% of CILA residents, and would cut \$86.7 million in funding from adult I/DD services and supports in Illinois. This proposal is at odds with the leadership established with this Administration to build back our social safety net and to advance state budgets that invest in the disability services array in Illinois.

Last April, DHS-DDD indicated it would reconvene the *Ligas* Rates Oversight Committee and rates consultants to work on the ICAP+HRST implementation within CILA rates. Regrettably, that work did not begin until October 2023, meaning several months of dialogue that could've been spent reaching agreement on a methodology implementation were lost. During each of the most recent three meetings of the Committee, the provider community learned additional details about the Division's proposals, which have led to additional questions and concerns. At this time, there remains no consensus with the Committee on an implementation strategy. However, the DHS-DDD is poised to implement these drastic cuts by March 31, 2024. It is not fair or appropriate to implement a systemwide methodology affecting approximately 10,000 individuals and 233 provider organizations so rapidly and with such continued broad-based concerns.

For the entirety of FY24, our organization has been without rate sheets, which provide details necessary for us to determine how we are being reimbursed for the services we are being provided. However, based on projections EP!C Inc. can make, we anticipate the following concerns with proposals outlined by DHS-DDD:

- Projected DSP hour reduction = 22,400
- Projected DSP funding reduction = \$458,000
- Projected DSP capacity reduction = 11%

On December 2, 2023, members of the *Ligas* Rates Oversight Committee and the I/DD trade associations authored a formal letter outlining concerns and providing recommendations to DHS-DDD for further discussions on the ICAP+HRST and to avoid the drastic cuts being proposed. On behalf of the individuals EP!C Inc. serves and supports, we respectfully request you support the recommendations outlined in the letter, which include:

- Delay implementation of the new rate methodology until no sooner than January 1, 2025;
- Maintain existing distribution of DSP hours (as of 12/31/22) for inclusion in the Governor's FY25 Introduced Budget;
- Distribute up-to-date and accurate CILA rate sheets as soon as possible on the current ICAP+HRST proposal to all providers; and
- Continue regular meetings of the Ligas Oversight Committee, including the Guidehouse team, to prepare CILA rate model proposals that do not eliminate \$87.7 million in funding to the system.

We greatly appreciate the leadership Governor JB Pritzker has shown in advancing budgets that invest in disability services in Illinois. It is with recognition of that leadership that we can't support the cuts proposed by DHS-DDD and respectfully request that you allow the work of the Oversight Committee to continue in the form and manner recommended above.

Sincerely,

Concerned Staff/Board Member of EP!C, an agency providing are services and programming for people with cognitive differences.