



YOUR PLAN, YOUR WAY

PHP Care Complete FIDA-I/DD (Medicare - Medicaid Plan)

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## Written Testimony for Legislative Hearing on OPWDD Budget February 16, 2023

Partners Health Plan (PHP) is a specialized managed care plan totally dedicated to supporting people with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities (I/DD) who are dually eligible for Medicare and Medicaid. PHP is the only managed care plan in New York State -- and in the country -- dedicated solely to this population. We currently serve 1,700 members who live in the nine downstate counties of New York State.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our views on the proposed budget for the Office of People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD).

### **Governor's proposed Article VII bill section Part EE called the "OPWDD Managed Care Statute Extender":**

We urge the Legislature's support of the Governor's proposed Article VII bill section Part EE called the "OPWDD Managed Care Statute Extender". The current legislation authorizing managed care for people with I/DD is set to expire in 2023. Through the current legislation, PHP has been operating since 2016, providing critical care management support and access to services for its members and their families.

PHP is a fully-integrated managed care plan, offering coverage for a wide range of services including I/DD services (residential, day and community habilitation, etc.); health services (medical, dental and long-term care); intensive care management, clinical supports and other unique benefits such as an "over the counter" card and non-emergent transportation to keep people connected to their communities.

Importantly, unlike other managed care programs in New York where populations are "mandated" to participate, PHP enrollment is totally based upon voluntary participation, meaning PHP's 1700 members and their families have selected PHP to help them get the support and services they need to live a quality life.

PHP continues to operate with the full support of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), NYS DOH and OPWDD. This support is based upon PHP's demonstrated success in delivering quality support and services coupled with an innovative model of person-centered care. The results speak for themselves:

1. PHP reduced member utilization of emergency rooms by 12% along with a 39% decline in inpatient hospital stays.
2. PHP continues to meet or exceed established critical preventive care measures and has performed better than other health plans in NYS and nationally in such areas as colorectal cancer screening, diabetes testing and control, breast cancer screening, controlling high blood pressure, member vaccinations for flu and COVID-19 and accessing annual wellness and dental visits.

According to an independent evaluation of PHP commissioned by CMS and issued in June 2022, PHP has performed well on quality measures, consumer satisfaction is high, experienced low disenrollment, increased



enrollment of the Willowbrook protected class, offers a flexible benefit package, and has developed a pharmacy benefit program.

To ensure that 1700 members and their families continue to have the “right to choose” PHP as its managed care plan and to maintain all of their services, while allowing PHP to continue its great work, PHP needs your support and the support of your Leadership to extend Part EE of the HMH Article VII bill.

**Direct Support Professionals (DSP) Wages and the workforce challenge:**

The responsibility of a managed care plan, such as PHP, is to make sure that its members can fully access the supports and services that the plan offers that will assist them to have quality outcomes that can lead to a healthy and meaningful life. In order to make that happen, PHP partners with its broad provider network, including OPWDD nonprofit service providers. In fact, in supporting its 1700 members, PHP spends approximately 80% of its budget on OPWDD supports and services delivered almost exclusively by these nonprofit service providers. All are reporting significant challenges in maintaining safe staffing levels to support people both in their residences and in the community. That struggle is only worsening, and is now a crisis, due to a vacancy rate of more than 20% and staff turnover rates than can be as high as 35%.

As part of her Executive Budget, Governor Hochul has put forward several increases for OPWDD, most notably, a 2.5% cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) for all OPWDD funded supports and services. While we need the legislature to support an increase for this workforce, more must be done than what has been proposed in the Executive Budget. The proposed budget increase is not sufficient to attract or retain DSPs, given the need to recognize and reward the responsibilities and unique skills required of this workforce. This population needs to be supported by a well-trained, stable workforce that can successfully support a population with unique developmental, medical, and behavioral needs.

PHP supports the families and the OPWDD nonprofit service providers call for a permanent wage increase for DSPs that differentiates it as a professional position with unique responsibilities and skillsets. Wage increases are the first and most effective way to attract workers to these jobs with the goal of getting the DSP workforce to a “living wage”. Accordingly, we support their immediate request that the enacted FY24 Budget provide for an 8.5% COLA, which is tied to the consumer price index, and a permanent \$4,000 annual wage increase for DSPs.

Thank you for your consideration, and we welcome the opportunity to provide further information to the Committees.

Sincerely,

Courtney Skivington-Wolf  
Chief Operating Officer