

## **Testimony in Support of the Department of Health and Human Services' Respite Care Program**

*(I request that this testimony be posted anonymously, without my name or identifying information)*

I am writing to express my strong support for continued funding of the Department of Health and Human Services' Respite Care Program, based on my personal experience as a caregiver for an elderly parent.

Over the past two years, my family has been able to use the respite care program offered by The Arc Montgomery County on two occasions—essentially once per year, for about a week at a time. Although this support is limited in duration, it has been absolutely essential to our ability to continue providing long-term care for my parent.

Both my spouse and I work full time and are required to be physically present at our workplaces; we do not have the option to telework. On weekdays, most of our time is consumed by commuting and work responsibilities, while weekends are largely devoted to grocery shopping, household chores, and other necessary obligations. In addition to this, a significant portion of our remaining time is spent caring for my elderly parent, leaving us with very little opportunity to rest or recharge.

One of the ongoing challenges of caring for an elderly person is the need to follow strict dietary restrictions and fixed meal times. Most days, we prepare meals separately for my parent and for ourselves, which requires additional time and effort in the kitchen. Even on days when we go to bed very late due to work or household responsibilities, we must still wake up at the usual early hour the next morning to ensure that my parent's breakfast is served on time. This daily routine, while necessary, adds to the physical and emotional strain of caregiving.

Because my parent is very old and physically weak, we are unable to take them with us to most places we go. As a result, we often refrain from traveling altogether, even for short trips or meaningful family events. For example, we have been unable to travel to celebrate milestones such as our son's graduation or to take a long weekend away as a family.

The only time during the year that we are able to take a vacation or have a meaningful break from caregiving responsibilities is during the one week of respite care made possible through The Arc Montgomery County. That brief period of relief allows us to rest, attend important family events, and return to our caregiving role with renewed energy and focus.

Without this respite care support, taking any vacation or extended break would simply not be possible for us. Private respite care facilities are extremely expensive and not affordable

for our family. The publicly funded respite care program is therefore not a luxury—it is an essential support that makes sustained family caregiving possible.

I respectfully urge continued and strong funding for the Department of Health and Human Services' Respite Care Program. Even limited access—such as one week per year—has a profound impact on the well-being of caregivers and enables families like ours to continue caring for our loved ones at home with dignity and compassion.

Thank you for your consideration and for supporting families who depend on this vital program.