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Lieutenant Governor

KATHLEEN E. WALSH
Secretary, Executive Office
of Health & Human Services

ROBIN LIPSON
Secretary, Executive Office of
Aging & Independence

February 10, 2025

Paul J. Lanzikos
Dignity Alliance Massachusetts, Coordinator
Executive Office of Elder Affairs, Fmr. Secretary
Paul.Lanzikos@gmail.com

Via Email

Dear Paul,

Thank you for your letter on behalf of the membership of Dignity Alliance Massachusetts, and for sharing your thoughts and concerns regarding implementation of updates to the State Home Care Program. The Healey Driscoll Administration appreciates your steadfast advocacy on behalf of older adults, a mission that we share, and which continues to be a priority. We recognize the importance of ensuring that vulnerable populations continue to receive the care and support they need.

The Massachusetts Home Care Program offers certain services that support older adults to live where and how they want. Home Care services include home health, supportive home care aide, personal care, homemaker, home delivered meals, transportation, adult day health services, and other services as defined in 651 CMR 3.02. The Home Care Program is inclusive of Home Care Basic and Enhanced Community Options Programs (ECOP). Individuals who meet the Home Care eligibility criteria described at 651 CMR 3.04 are eligible to access services through Basic and ECOP. ECOP supports consumers who meet nursing facility level of care, and so more services and greater administrative case management are generally necessary to support these consumers.

As you are aware, we are in the process of implementing two administrative changes in how we manage ECOP. For additional context:

- The first is to better align the service cost threshold for ECOP to the applicable rate of payment to ASAPs, which is more than twice the Basic rate. ASAPs would move consumers into ECOP when the cost of services is at least a specified portion of the Basic rate. The cost threshold was relaxed for several years (throughout the COVID-19 emergency), and it is now returning to the prior threshold of twice the Basic rate.
- The second is to steady the rate of transitions to ECOP by having ASAPs manage movement from Basic to ECOP based on an enrollment target. No one currently in ECOP will be moved to Basic as a result of implementing this enrollment target, nor will

anyone lose access to Home Care services, although in some instances, there may be additional time before consumers currently in Basic may be moved to ECOP.

These changes are only being implemented for enrollments into ECOP. These measures will not affect existing ECOP consumers and will not affect eligibility for, or enrollment in, the Home Care program. Stated another way, no one's access to Home Care Basic enrollment or services will be limited, restricted, or denied because of these changes.

These administrative changes were reviewed with Mass Aging Access, the association representing ASAPs, and the Home Care Alliance and Home Care Aide Council and were received as prudent initiatives to responsibly manage the program growth given the fiscal environment. In addition, Chairs of the Elder Affairs Committee were made aware of these intended changes.

Although neither of these administrative updates deviate from current statutory or regulatory authority and a public hearing is not required, we continue to meet regularly with stakeholders and have been providing updates on these intended changes. In each of these cases, we have described the reason for these changes and heard and carefully considered feedback. I appreciate your comments and look forward to receiving any additional information you want to share with me directly.

We look forward to continuing dialogue to consider how to most effectively administer the Home Care Program for all consumers.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Robin".

Robin

CC:

Governor Maura Healey

Lt. Governor Kim Driscoll

Secretary Matthew Gorzkowicz, Executive Office of Administration & Finance

Secretary Kate Walsh, Executive Office of Health & Human Services

Kate Cook, Office of the Governor

Sarah Sabshon, Office of the Governor

Peter Tiernan, Dignity Alliance Massachusetts