



February 2022

Dear Friends of UCP Heartland,

The annual Missouri State Legislative process is well underway. Each year, both House and Senate Legislators are tasked with approving a balanced budget that goes into effect July 1st. Governor Parson has submitted his proposed budget and included in section 10.410 of the state operating budget, is a rate increase for Developmental Disability providers, such as UCP Heartland. The House Budget Committee is beginning to draft the overall state operating budget at the end of February.

These next couple of months are important because it is vital that the proposed increase is maintained in the approved budget. As you know, the market around us is raising wages and we are unable to compete for quality direct care employees without this increased funding. Workforce headwinds remain daunting and without this investment, the ability to retain current quality staff, attract new candidates to fill growing vacancies, and ensure individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities receive extraordinary care and support, will continue to be greatly impacted. If you would like to send a message to your State Representative(s), you can visit <https://www.votervoice.net/MARF/Campaigns/91861/Respond>. Please utilize the guide to the right to send the email. I encourage you to edit the sample verbiage provided on the right but ask you to please not change the closing request, as it is important our statewide advocacy efforts are clear and consistent in our messaging.

Another key piece of funding to enhance quality of life and to have access to services like UCP Heartland is transportation. Currently, over 50% of UCP Heartland St. Louis Day Service clients utilize transportation services from OATS Transit. Across the St. Louis Metro, the provider gave notice to 115 current riders effective April 30, 2022, due to inadequate rate reimbursement structure from the Department of Mental Health. This not only effects individuals attending UCP Heartland, but it impacts over 250 clients across the St. Louis metro area who are without transportation services. The main issue with the current structure and the proposed rates is that people who choose to live in the community where they work or attend a program during the day get penalized. 64% of the current riders live less than 10 miles from their destination and this rate is detrimental to the financial sustainability of providers. We are asking families to contact their legislators and request an increase for metro transportation. We are asking that an urban rate table be created separately from the current rate table, as the current rates do not appear to take into consideration the non-billable driver times, the increase time spent in traffic, and cost of living.

As always, thank you for your support of UCP Heartland.

With sincere gratitude,

Clint Bolser, CEO