

Testimony on HF1416, Ken Bence, ARRM

Thank you Chair Fischer and members of the committee.

For the record, my name is Ken Bence, and I am the Director of Research, Analysis and Policy for ARRM, an association dedicated to leading the advancement of Home and Community Based Services and supporting over 130 residential services providers across the state.

As Rep. Curran stated, the purpose of House File 1416 is to correct gaps in how the ICS service works, especially for people who were being successfully supported in apartments prior to the end of SLS and the introduction of ICS. The vision of ICS is to provide another option to the continuum of living arrangements available to people who want a greater degree of independence than a community residential setting affords, but still require supportive services up to 24 hours per day. We agree with this vision! As ICS has been rolling out in 2 waivers over the past 2 years, and some of the rules have been tweaked, we see opportunity and we wish to improve the structure of the service to allow providers more flexibility and efficiency in supporting apartment living with the level of support specified in each person's assessed need and their support plan.

Now, I get to go into the technical details. Specifically, this bill would allow an ICS provider to deliver the service in more than one building in a multi-building apartment complex, rather than the current restriction to only 1 building in a complex. Especially in cases where people have been successfully supported in apartments for many years, the one building restriction means that people either have to move into another apartment, all in one building, which may not even be available, or move to a less independent setting that they may not want. I should note that DHS has submitted this provision to CMS to make the change in the documents for all 4 waivers. Assuming the change is approved, we would like it codified in statute.

Next, the bill would change existing restrictions to allow multiple ICS providers to operate in a multi-unit building, subject to department review, to ensure the setting is not isolating, and allow more than one provider to deliver ICS and other residential waiver services, including customized living and community residential services, in the same building or complex. And it would expand housing options by changing the minimum size of an ICS setting from 3 units to 2. With the severe staffing and housing shortages impacting all sectors of our state's economy, we believe that removing these restrictions would allow more people to access the benefits of ICS, and in a more cost-effective manner.

Finally, the bill would modify the rate structure of ICS to more closely emulate the former SLS service by allowing ICS providers to provide the appropriate level of support, including shared staffing, nursing and transportation, to reduce isolation and promote community integration. As in all waiver services, the formal assessment and service planning process determines the level of support a person is eligible for; this bill would allow the individual to have greater choice of providers from which they receive their services.

Now that I have bored you with the technical description, I would like you to hear from some service providers. First, I have Joe Peterson from Opportunity Partners.