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Chairman Hilderbrand and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to share information regarding IDD provider workforce issues. My name is Stephanie Rasmussen. I am the Vice President of Long-Term Supports & Services for Sunflower Health Plan.

Sunflower Health Plan currently has 4,812 members receiving services through the Home & Community Based IDD waiver. This constitutes 53% of the states total participants on the IDD waiver. We also have 38 members receiving services within Intermediate Care Facilities for Persons with IDD, which is 84% of the statewide total.

Since April of 2020, Sunflower has been hosting a bi-weekly LTSS stakeholder meeting to discuss issues related to the pandemic. This collaborative includes representatives of KDADS and the other MCOs, InterHab, several IDD providers and Community Developmental Disability Organizations, as well as other HCBS providers and member advocacy organizations. Through this meeting, and through communications with our provider representatives and care coordinators, we are aware of the increasing shortage of direct caregivers for persons in Home & Community based services.

Thus far, Sunflower has not experienced the loss of an IDD provider due to workforce issues. However, we have experienced situations of providers stopping some services in order to redirect staff to other services. For example, one provider chose to end IDD Targeted Case Management (TCM) services so they could have the TCMs help with providing direct care. Several providers have also communicated to us that they have every possible person providing direct care, including administrators and other office personnel. Several providers have stopped taking new participants into direct services. Similarly we have seen a few nursing facilities consolidate their locations, or close. The direct caregiver workforce issue is impacting services across all HCBS programs, including both agency and self-directed services, and assisted living and nursing facilities.

We all have known, even prior to the pandemic, that there is a growing shortage of direct caregivers in comparison to the number of people needing care. The pandemic has exacerbated the need for solutions. Although wage increases are an important solution for recognizing the hard work that direct caregivers do, and for competing with the pay of other local businesses, wage increases alone won't resolve the issue.

Sunflower has identified at least three potential ways that we believe we can assist with the direct caregiver workforce issue:

- **Expanding Uses of Technology:** We currently have a local provider that uses a combination of smart home technology and 24/7 remote monitoring and coaching to support persons with IDD within their homes/communities. This is beyond what telehealth monitoring typically offers and is a promising way of helping individuals become more independent and decreasing the number of persons required to provide care. We have identified one other Kansas provider and an out-of-state provider that also offer more comprehensive supports through using technology. Our current intent is to partner with IDD providers to engage in pilots, and to offer KDADS information about types of technologies, cost, and recommended changes to the IDD waiver for how to pay for this type of care. Expanded use of technology within other

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HCBS waiver programs will also potentially help "free up" caregivers who then can be hired to work with persons who need in-person care.

- **Staffing Models:** We have visited with KDADS, InterHab and a few IDD providers about the ability to expand the use of service models that offer high quality care but require fewer caregivers. Shared living is one example of this. We worked with several IDD providers 5 years ago to develop a best-practice shared living manual for KDADS and providers to utilize to ensure high quality expansion of this service. We have had a very initial conversation with InterHab and IDD providers about partnering to review the manual, make necessary updates and provide a proposal to KDADS for expanding this service option.
- **Family Caregivers:** During the emergency order, we have had expanded flexibility to approve for family members and guardians to be paid. We have received Initial, high-level feedback within our LTSS stakeholder meetings about the potential value of continuing some or all of the flexibility to expand the pool of persons who can be paid to provide care. A suggestion was also made to evaluate the option of offering a flexible subsidy to natural support family caregivers who do not receive other pay. We plan to continue working with stakeholders to evaluate the need for future flexibility, with appropriate guardrails, and to make recommendations to KDADS.

In 2020, Centene also purchased a platform for ADvancing States for matching caregivers to jobs, and for providers to use to manage workforce needs. ADvancing States is the national association of State Aging & Disability agencies. Currently, 7 state agencies are using the platform, which is called Connect To Care Jobs. ADvancing States is in the process of making improvements to the platform and plans to offer it to more states before the end of this year.

Thank you again for the opportunity to share this information. I'm happy to answer any questions you have.