



December 8, 2025

The Honorable Kristen Gillibrand  
Ranking Member  
Special Committee on Aging  
United States Senate  
G16 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

**RE: United States Senate Special Committee on Aging Hearing Regarding the Importance of Community Living for Older Adults and People with Disabilities. Delivered via email to [hcbs@aging.senate.gov](mailto:hcbs@aging.senate.gov).**

Dear Ranking Member Gillibrand:

On behalf of [Service Coordination, Inc.](#) (SCI), thank you for holding a hearing about the importance of community living for older adults and people with disabilities and the opportunity to provide the U.S. Special Committee on Aging a statement for the record, "Aging in Place: The Impact of Community during the Holidays". With this letter, we submit stories from three Maryland seniors about the importance of Home and Community Based Services (HCBS). HCBS are essential for people with disabilities, older adults, and people with complex medical needs. We especially appreciate the committee's dedicated focus on the value of HCBS services.

Service Coordination, Inc. (SCI) is a nonprofit, providing conflict-free case management services and advocacy for more than 16,000 people of all ages with disabilities and medically complex needs across Maryland. SCI is the largest nonprofit case management organization in Maryland, and we employ over 1,200 team members, many of whom are Coordinators of Community Services and Supports Planners, providing critical case management services for people enrolled in various Medicaid Waiver and State Plan programs. SCI helps people navigate complex systems by championing choice, fostering community, and nurturing connections.

#### HCBS Conflict-Free Case Management is Essential

Conflict-free case management is an essential aspect of delivering HCBS, designed to ensure that people receive unbiased support tailored specifically to their unique needs. This approach promotes individualized support. With an unbiased case management system, people are more likely to receive care that truly reflects their preferences and choices. Case managers explore a wider range of options, ensuring people have access to the most suitable services that meet their specific needs. Conflict-free case management stands as a cornerstone of an effective and trustworthy system for HCBS. By prioritizing independence and objectivity, this approach not only enhances the trust and accountability within the service delivery system but also significantly improves the quality of care for those it serves, ultimately empowering people to lead self-determined lives in their communities.

#### HCBS Waiver Services in Maryland and Criteria to Qualify

Maryland has made a significant commitment to its residents by choosing to participate in the Medicaid program, establishing a framework that emphasizes HCBS as a viable and cost-effective alternative to institutional care. This decision reflects a broader recognition of the importance of supporting people in their own communities rather than confining them to institutional settings.

**Service Coordination, Inc.**

5283 Corporate Drive, Suite 103, Frederick, Maryland 21703  
301-663-8044, 888-240-6835 • [info@sc-inc.org](mailto:info@sc-inc.org) • [www.ServiceCoord.org](http://www.ServiceCoord.org)

At the heart of Maryland's approach is the Medicaid state plan, which outlines various provisions and related authorities, such as demonstration projects and waivers, including the Community Options Waiver, Community First Choice Program, and the Community Pathways Waiver. These elements work together to create a system that prioritizes HCBS, enabling people to receive the support they need in the comfort of their homes. This not only alleviates the financial burden of institutional care but also promotes a higher quality of life for those receiving services. Eligibility for these vital services is carefully determined, with Maryland establishing clear criteria that consider factors such as income, functional ability, and the specific needs of individuals. This ensures that the support is directed toward those who require it most, including older adults, individuals with disabilities, and those managing complex medical needs.

HCBS aims to enhance the quality of life for people by offering services that significantly enhance their ability to live independently, participate in their communities and access vital services that promote their overall well-being. Furthermore, HCBS encourages family and community involvement, creating robust support networks that contribute to overall health and well-being. The flexibility and choice inherent in these services empower people to select the types of assistance they receive and how it is delivered, making their care experience more aligned with their personal values and needs.

#### Stories\* Which Highlight the Value and Importance of HCBS Services

*\*Some names given are pseudonyms to protect privacy.*

##### Gary's Story

*Gary is 54 years old and resides in Allegany County, Maryland. He is a successful construction business owner and traveled across the United States for work. After a severe work-related injury in 2024, he was unable to move anything below his neck. He described feeling "hopeless," facing a 99% chance of never walking again from numerous different medical providers and was institutionalized in a long-term care nursing facility.*

*Within a few months, however, he began to regain limited mobility and was approved for HCBS services through the Community Options Waiver Program. With assistance from his supports planner, he explored non-Medicaid resources such as housing, financial assistance, legal support, transportation services, and other community-based services that would allow him to transition home safely. While his supports planner worked to build a foundation for independence, he pushed himself daily – walking more, training harder, preparing for a future and life he refused to give up.*

*Since transitioning back into a community-based apartment, his recovery has been tremendous. He no longer uses any assistive devices and has regained most of his mobility. His social connections have strengthened, and he now spends time with friends and engages actively in his community. Most inspiring of all, his ambition has fully returned – he plans to re-enter the workforce, rebuild a business, and eventually resume traveling.*

*When asked about how HCBS and supports planning services assisted him with reintegrating into the community and improving his health and ambitions, Gary stated: "without the support of HCBS and my supports planner, I would not have had access to the local resources that made safe housing, rental and energy assistance, and other community-based programs possible". Gary reports that these services allowed him to make a successful transition back into the community, something he would not have been*

*able to afford or arrange independently. Gary also shared: “I believe without the support from HCBS personal assistance services, home delivered meals, nurse monitoring, and supports planning, I would still be in the nursing facility. If I did not receive assistance from the HCBS and my supports planner, I would not have the ambition, stability, and improvements in my overall quality of life that I am grateful to have today.”*

*Gary says he “feels like a brand-new person,” and credits his recovery to the opportunities, support, and independence made possible through HCBS.*

*Notably the cost of a semi-private room in a nursing home in Maryland is approximately \$12,501 a month, about \$150,012 a year<sup>1</sup>. The HCBS services that Gary accessed included personal assistance, meal delivery, nurse monitoring, and supports planning. These supportive services cost approximately \$27,000 a year and were covered by Medicaid.*

### Mary's Story

*Mary is 77 years old and resides in Harford County, Maryland. She was at risk of being forcibly removed from her home due to the absence of necessary supportive services. Her health had been declining, and she was no longer able to care for herself or maintain her living environment. She was unable to take out her trash, resulting in rotting food and soiled adult briefs remaining in the home for extended periods. She also had significant difficulty with mobility, including accessing the bathroom, which prevented her from showering and maintaining personal hygiene.*

*Since the initiation of HCBS services through the Community First Choice Program, her personal condition and living situation have improved dramatically. Through her personal assistance services, her trash is now regularly removed, she can move to and from the bathroom safely and is provided with hygiene assistance in her home. She also receives a Personal Emergency Response System which allows her to contact emergency services through the push of a button. Further, her nurse monitor and supports planner come into her home routinely and provide housing and safety checks to ensure her apartment remains in good condition and she is safe. As a result of this support, she has been able to remain safely in her home and has avoided placement in a nursing facility. These supportive services cost approximately \$25,000 a year and were covered by Medicaid.*

### Freddy's Story

*Freddy is 71 years old and has resided in both Frederick and Harford County, Maryland. In 2024, he lived with his two sisters alternating between their houses. Although he used a walker and could feed himself, his balance and upper-body strength were declining, making it difficult for his sisters to care for him. A priority assessment through HCBS programming in November 2024 found he was no longer safe in their homes due to his worsening mobility and the homes' limited accessibility.*

*He applied for HCBS services in December of 2024. During the review process, his health declined further; he became fully dependent on his wheelchair for mobility, needed help eating, and was hospitalized twice, with the second stay leading to spinal surgery and rehabilitation care. With consistent physical therapy, he*

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. News and World Report, “Nursing Home Costs and How to Pay” November 26, 2025: [Nursing Home Costs and How to Pay | U.S. News](#)

*gradually regained mobility and returned to using a walker. He was approved for the HCBS Community Pathways Waiver in February 2025 and began residential and day services in April of 2025.*

*He happily transitioned into his new residence, decorating his room with family photos, sports memorabilia, and his collection of antique diecast coin banks—plus a stash of cookies and his bowling ball. His day program quickly became the highlight of his week. He has made many friends, found a girlfriend, enjoys regular outings, and goes bowling every Friday.*

*Today, thanks to HCBS supports, he is thriving, living safely, staying social, exploring the community, and fully embracing life.*

We are deeply grateful to the Senate Special Committee on Aging for inviting stories and lifting the experiences of Medicaid beneficiaries who receive HCBS waiver services. Please consider SCI a resource to you and your staff. For further information, please contact Sarah Christa Butts, Vice President of Government Relations at [Sarah.Butts@sc-inc.org](mailto:Sarah.Butts@sc-inc.org) or 240-741-2273.

Sincerely,



Tenneille Aleshire, Executive Vice President and Chief Program Officer

cc: Hon. Angela Alsobrooks