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Pennsylvania Transportation Alliance –

Advocating for accessible and affordable transportation for individuals with disabilities

November 14, 2019

The Honorable Michelle Brooks
Senate Box 203050
168 Main Capitol Bldg.
Harrisburg, PA 17120-3050

Dear Senator Brooks:

Thank you for inviting us to testify on Wednesday November 20, 2019 at 9:30AM regarding Pennsylvania's proposed to the Medical Assistance Transportation Program (MATP) and the move to a full scale brokerage model for human services transportation. This change was included in Act 40 of 2018 with the subsequent delay in rolling MATP / human services transportation broker as out as part of the proposed study in Act 19 of 2019.

The Pennsylvania Transportation Alliance is an advocacy group which supports the interests of protecting current and expanding transportation options for individuals with disabilities. Our organization has been active on this issue. As our time is limited, we will briefly summarize the following concerns here. Jeff Iseman, the Public Policy and Outreach Coordinator from Pennsylvania Statewide Independent Living Council (PA SILC), will start off our testimony. Mark Edwards from Cumberland County, a user of MATP and Persons With Disabilities (PWD) Shared Ride program will offer additional insights from a user (consumer) perspective follow a summary of concerns noted below.

Our primary concerns with the proposed changes to MATP and moving toward a full scale transportation brokerage model included in Act 40 of 2018:

- **Lack of broad based consumer statewide input-** Until recently, PA DHS has provided very limited opportunities for consumers across Pennsylvania to offer comments on these changes to MATP and moving toward a human services transportation broker. Stakeholder input from Harrisburg entities alone does not constitute statewide community input, particularly regarding the inclusion of MATP users and other populations impacted by the proposed changes. We would like to see additional time and stakeholder engagement on a statewide basis to offer public comments.
- **Healthcare Reductions-** MATP reductions may force individuals into higher cost options or go without healthcare which can lead to increased illnesses, more expensive hospitalizations, greater

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Institutionalization (nursing homes) and possible death. Additionally, there are concerns about consumers missing or being late to appointments which can lead to individuals being refused services and dropped from medical providers through no fault of their own.

- **Increased costs to consumers-** We have heard that transportation providers will have to increase costs in shared ride programs to offset losses in MATP funds. Most of the users of both PWD and Senior Shared Ride tend to be on low and fixed incomes that must bear the difficult burden of higher transportation costs.
- **Impact on Community Health Choices (CHC) consumers, particularly in Region 3 rollout -2020- mostly rural PA.** At this time, the MATP / broker changes would be rolled in 2020 at the same time that 48 counties will be implementing CHC in Northwest, Central and Northeast Pennsylvania. Transportation had already been a challenge in CHC and the same transportation brokers may be managing both MATP and CHC Transportation with the multiple changes. Region 3 has much less rural broadband and cell phone service which is essential to coordinating an effective 21st century transportation system for people with disabilities and seniors.
- **Cultural Competency-** There are concerns about the companies and drivers contracted by the not transportation brokers may be trained to work with various types of people with disabilities. Personal staff knowledge of populations served and local challenges by transportation entities is also important to consider for this issue.
- **MATP rates (both drivers and consumer reimbursements)-** We have heard that MATP and other para-transit providers have had challenges recruiting drivers. This impacts the ability to provide quality transportation in a timely manner. In addition, the current MATP rate for individuals either transporting themselves or obtaining a driver is .12 cents per mile which has been the status quo for years. This rate is too low, particularly when other government or private sector rates for mileage reimbursement either mirror or are much closer to the current IRS rate of .58 cents per mile.

Other comments:

- Other states, such as Texas, have gone in the direction proposed by Act 40 of 2018. Consumers have reported service reductions, addition trip delays and increased costs. If the purpose was to improve efficiencies, that does not appear to be the case.

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- **Financial Impact- PA and Transportation:** We understand that is additional Federal Medicaid Assistance Program (FMAP) which could yield an additional \$15 M. We hear that PPTA has noted that there could be over \$30M lost to Pennsylvania by going to the model proposed in Act 40 of 2018.

Mark Edwards will now offer his own comments as a MATP and PWD Shared Ride user.

We thank you for consideration of our concerns. Please do not hesitate to reach out to us should you have further questions.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John L. Tague, Jr." in a cursive style.

John L Tague, Jr

Pennsylvania Transportation Alliance, Chair

CC:

Senator Kim Ward
Senator Art Haywood
Senator John Sabatina

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