

UnlockGA Statement on HCBS Waiver Funding and the 2027 Budget

May, 2026

To: Georgia Policymakers, Community Leaders, Advocates, Families and Network Partners

Dear Partners and Community Members,

The Governor's disregard of the waivers, reducing the number of spots from 500 approved during the legislative session to 100, **means that many people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) and their families who were hoping to finally receive waiver services and community-based supports will continue facing long waitlists, gaps in care, and uncertainty about the future.** For people and families, this is not just a budget decision, it affects daily life, access to support, caregiver stability, independence, and the ability for people with disabilities to fully live and participate in their communities.

It also highlights that **expanding Home Community Based Services (HCBS) waivers is not only the right thing to do, but a fiscally responsible investment in the long run.** There is vast and sound evidence¹²³⁴ published in recent data and studies that community-based services help prevent more costly crisis responses, institutionalization, emergency care, and caregiver burnout. In fact, limiting access to preventative and community-based supports will likely increase costs in emergency response systems and crisis services over time. **Reducing the number of new waiver slots may create short-term budget savings, but it leaves people and families without the supports they need to participate in community life in a truly inclusive and sustainable way, while also producing greater long-term costs through increased reliance on crisis services, emergency response systems, and institutional care.**

¹ Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services. (n.d.). Money Follows the Person success stories. Medicaid. Retrieved April 8, 2026, from <https://www.medicare.gov/medicaid/long-term-services-supports/money-follows-person/money-follows-person-success-stories>

² Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services. (2026, March 10). LTSS overview. CMS. <https://www.cms.gov/training-education/partner-outreach-resources/american-indian-alaska-native/ltss-ta-center/information/tribal-leaders/ltss-overview>

³ Carpenter, A., Stepanczuk, C., Murray, C., & Wysocki, A. (2025). Trends in users and expenditures for Home and Community-Based Services as a share of total Medicaid Long-Term Services and Supports users and expenditures, 2023. Mathematica for Centers for Medicare and Medicaid (CMS). <https://www.medicare.gov/medicaid/long-term-services-supports/downloads/ltss-rebalancing-brief-2023.pdf>

⁴ Burns, A., Wolk, A., & O'Malley Watts, M. (2025, November 20). A look at waiting lists for Medicaid Home- and Community-Based Services from 2016 to 2025. KFF. <https://www.kff.org/medicaid/a-look-at-waiting-lists-for-medicare-home-and-community-based-services-from-2016-to-2025/>

This is UnlockGA's position:

1. **We are concerned that the final 2027 budget includes funds for only 100 waiver slots, given that 1,217 are critically needed** by people with disabilities who cannot afford to keep waiting.
2. We are encouraged that the budget includes a note about additional waiver slots, and we want to share important context: **relying on attrition alone does not address the growing need, because as some individuals leave the waitlist, a new generation of people with disabilities is aging into adult services and joining it.** We also look forward to learning more about how the anticipated 900 additional slots through attrition were calculated.
3. **We continue to be concerned that insufficient waiver funding perpetuates Georgia's reliance on institutional, facility-based, and congregate services,** and places significant strain on families who step into caregiving roles leading to caregiver burnout. The data is clear, community-based supports are better for Georgians with disabilities, better for families, better for communities, and better for the economy.
4. **We are grateful for the incredible advocacy and partnership from UnlockGA coalition members, led by Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities (GCDD) and allies across the state.** Their efforts made a meaningful difference throughout the legislative session, helping grow the initial proposal from 100 slots to 1,217, with 500 included in the budget with bipartisan support.
5. **We are grateful to the legislators who championed funding for waiver slots.** We look forward to meeting with legislators this summer and fall to share data and information about the continued and growing need for waiver slots, and to discuss what adequate funding would mean for Georgians with disabilities and their families.
6. **We know that connection and collective advocacy are more important than ever. We encourage everyone who cares about this issue to join UnlockGA's Waivers, not Walls initiative and stay engaged as this important work continues.**

Sincerely,



UnlockGA Coalition



Parent to Parent of Georgia