

"Fight for \$15"/Minimum Wage and Developmental Disability Services

**POSITION:
SUPPORT**

BILL SUMMARY

The bill (HB166 / SB280) phases in an increase to the state minimum wage to \$15/hour by 2023. The bill includes a mandate for the Governor to include in the budget a rate increase for developmental disability community services each year that the minimum wage increases.

Direct support professionals work for community-based agencies doing critically important work supporting people with developmental disabilities to live and work in their communities.

Direct support professionals are required under State law to complete DDA-mandated training, and often they must also be certified by the Board of Nursing as a certified medication technician.

Direct support professionals do work in which they are responsible for the well-being of people they support, ranging from personal care to helping people get a job and learn the skills needed to be employed. Their work can be demanding physically, mentally and emotionally, and that requires skill, compassion, and commitment.

Developmental disability (DD) community providers are unlike other employers in that they are completely reliant on the State Department of Health to fund the supports they provide.

DD providers are funded with **state and federal Medicaid dollars** to provide vital community-based supports that would otherwise be provided in State institutions.

DD providers are precluded by **federal law** from passing on cost increases to the people they support.

For more information, contact
Lauren Kallins, lkallins@macsonline.org.

KEY POINTS

An increase in the state minimum wage without adequate funding for DD community providers will seriously jeopardize community supports for 17,000 Marylanders with developmental disabilities and their families.

Funding for direct support wages as a percentage of the minimum wage has fallen to the lowest level since 2005, from 69% above the minimum wage in 2005, to just 20% above the minimum wage in 2019. The funding provided by the State has to cover all direct support wages, from those who are just starting to those with the most tenure.

As a result of the decline, starting wages for many direct support staff are just at or above the minimum wage. Without an adequate direct support workforce, community services will not be available to meet the needs of citizens with developmental disabilities.

For this reason, Maryland providers are experiencing the worst workforce crisis in a lifetime with high turnover and vacancy rates.

Urge legislators to:

Support the "Fight for \$15" legislation and keep the provision that funds DD community services in the bill

and

"Fence off" an additional \$22.5m (general funds) in the FY 20 budget to fully fund the 7% rate increase included in the bill, which is needed to keep direct support wages above the minimum wage the first year of implementation.