North Carolina's Invisible Heroes

House Bill 914: Support Our Direct Care Workforce

We need your help to stabilize our extraordinary workforce that provides critical assistance to children, families, and individuals with disabilities, behavioral health needs and older adults across our state, by thoughtfully investing in the future of caregivers through commensurate compensation.

Your support can ensure a well-staffed and respected care system that meets the needs of North Carolinians receiving support through Medicaid services by allocating funding and ensuring that rate increases are implemented to support increased wages and/or benefits.

Background:

The "invisible" support system for so many people in North Carolina is driven by the hardworking staff that commit to providing direct care and support services to Medicaid recipients.

These unsung heroes deliver services to our most vulnerable people with dignity, grace, and care for limited compensation. These employees, embracing a breadth of knowledge and skills, work each and every day with children, adults, and families to offer the means to live a life of opportunity, purpose, well-being, freedom, and contribution.

They provide a variety of therapeutic support services that are vital to helping people live with dignity and maximum independence in their homes and communities and within long-term care and treatment facilities.

They also support individuals as they engage in their communities and in employment. They perform this essential role for wages that are not commensurate to the amount of responsibility required.

Regrettably, some assume that lower wages mean that the occupation is not professionalized or does not require expertise. This assumption is mistaken since these positions require extensive training, responsibility, and compliance with regulations.

AARP North Carolina · Alliance Health · AHHC of NC · Autism Society of North Carolina · benchmarks: An Alliance of Agencies Helping Children, Adults & Families · Cardinal Innovations Healthcare · CBC Community Based Care · Eastpointe · FOR Quality Long Term Care · Lutheran Services Carolinas · NC COA Coalition on Aging · National Domestic Workers Alliance · NC Direct Care Workforce Crisis Work Group · North Carolina Assisted Living Association · North Carolina Developmental Disabilities Consortium · ncdsa North Carolina Down Syndrome Alliance: empower · connect · support · NCHCFA North Carolina Health Care Facilities Association: Advancing Skilled Nursing Care Since 1955 · Leadership | Purpose | Vision · north carolina Justice Center · NCPC North Carolina Providers Council: Advocating for Providers and Those They Support · North Carolina Senior Living Association · Partners: Improving Lives. Strengthening Communities. · PHI: Quality Care Through Quality Jobs · Sandhills Center · The Arc North Carolina · Trillium Health Resources · VayaHealth

Challenges:

Providers cannot remain competitive employers in an environment that increases demand but does not provide them the tools needed to respond to that demand, leading to large staff shortfalls and high turnover. This is particularly problematic for client-driven quality of care, which cannot be maintained or improved without a sufficient and fulfilled workforce.





- The employers providing support and care services funded by Medicaid are unable to compete with other service industries for wages.
- In addition to low wages, care and support work is physically, mentally, and emotionally demanding due to the care relationship, when compared with other similarly paid entry-level positions. Many job postings go completely unanswered.
- NC's providers are competing for staff with private sector companies such as Walmart, Costco, Amazon, Target, Kroger, and Starbucks that are paying upwards of $15 per hour.
- As well as competing with the private sector, the small businesses that employ direct care and support staff are also competing with the North Carolina government agencies that received a legislated wage floor for State employees providing support services, of $15 per hour in 2018.
- Low wages for Medicaid funded staff are the result of low rates of reimbursement for Medicaid services that have experienced little to no increase over the last decade.

Direct Care and Support Services are One of the Fastest Growing Economic Sectors

As North Carolina grows in population and as the number of aging adults increase, the demand for services will continue to rise. There are approximately 120,000 direct service professionals in North Carolina. The long-term care sector alone is expected to add an additional 28,000 positions in NC from 2018 to 2028. Local economies are not benefiting from full employment because this rapidly growing sector is unable to fill current vacancies or build the capacity for the increased need to come. This amplifies the future risk of decreased quality and availability of services.

"Investing in the workforce so that direct service professionals have fulfilling, financially sustainable and lifelong careers will benefit a large and at times vulnerable segment of society as well as the labor market." [ANCOR]