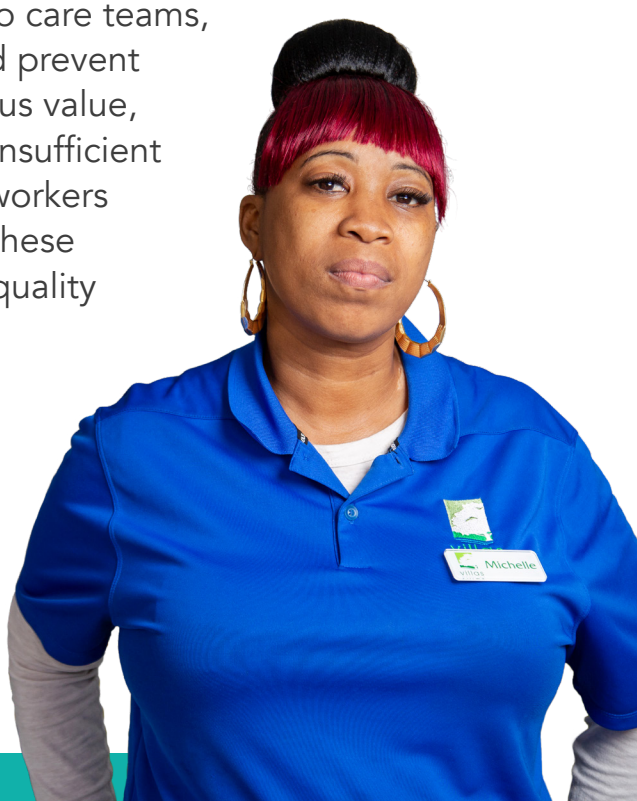
PHI QUALITY CARE THROUGH QUALITY JOBS

ESSENTIAL JOBS, ESSENTIAL CARE
NORTH CAROLINA

Throughout North Carolina—in private homes, nursing homes, and a variety of residential care settings—older adults and people with disabilities rely on almost 120,000 direct care workers to meet their daily needs and participate in their communities. Further, when properly trained, supported, and integrated into care teams, these workers promote better care for consumers and prevent costly outcomes. Unfortunately, despite their enormous value, direct care workers struggle with low compensation, insufficient training, and limited career paths, which drive many workers out of this sector. The COVID-19 crisis has amplified these challenges, leaving many workers without safe, high-quality jobs—and consumers without the care they deserve.

Now is the time to transform North Carolina's direct care workforce.



MICHELLE GODWIN, Certified Nursing Assistant

North Carolina's Direct Care Workforce

Direct care workers—formally classified as personal care aides, home health aides, and nursing assistants—support older adults and people with disabilities with activities of daily living (bathing, dressing, eating, toilet care, and mobility) and instrumental activities of daily living (preparing meals, shopping, housekeeping, managing medications, and attending appointments).

Systemic racism has long harmed the lives and jobs of people of color in direct care—from the creation of these jobs, through the exclusion of home care workers (and other domestic workers) from federal wage and overtime protections in the 1930s onwards, to the widespread racial discrimination that people of color continue to face in regard to employment, housing, education, and access to health care, among others. We must center and uplift women, people of color, and immigrants in strategies that transform direct care jobs. Direct care workers—who are largely women and people of color—deserve good jobs rooted in **equity** and **justice**.



RICARDO ARAUJO
Home Health Aide

BY THE NUMBERS*

92%
Women

61%
People of Color

5%
Immigrants

$11.44
Median Wage

$17,100
Median Annual Earnings

53%
In or Near Poverty

182,400
Projected Job Openings 2016-2026

Why These Workers Need State Policy Solutions

In states around the country, leaders and advocates from different sectors are coming together to advocate for policy reforms that support direct care workers and improve their jobs. Recognizing the essential role and unique needs of these workers, state policy leaders in turn are leading the way in strengthening and stabilizing the direct care workforce.

Lifting workers from poverty. Low wages impoverish direct care workers and compel high turnover in this sector. As a result, states around the country are pushing for higher wages and benefits for these workers, as well as paid leave and other financial security safeguards.

Investing in workforce innovations. From training to advanced roles and many other interventions that enhance the quality of direct care jobs, states are exploring a variety of innovative measures to boost recruitment and retention in this workforce.

Improving data to strengthen this sector. Robust data on the direct care workforce allows states to identify where shortages exist and track trends related to volume, stability, compensation, training, and other dimensions of job quality.

"It's a lot of work emotionally. Physically, it takes a toll on us. But it's rewarding in the end because the people we support become like family."

JESSALYNN BAYS
Care Partner



What We're Doing

The North Carolina Coalition on Aging and PHI have joined forces to lead a multi-year statewide advocacy initiative to transform jobs for North Carolina's direct care workers. By focusing on three critical policy areas—improving compensation, enacting workforce innovations, and strengthening data collection—in collaboration with a wide and diverse range of stakeholders across the state, this initiative will advance crucial policy reforms that strengthen this workforce and improve care for North Carolina's older adults and people with disabilities.



MARIA PERPIGNAN
Home Health Aide

To learn more and get involved, please contact our state leads:



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NC COA COALITION ON AGING

The North Carolina Coalition on Aging is a dynamic group of consumer, provider, and advocacy programs and organizations that represent North Carolina's aging population and gives voice to issues that affect older adults. The Coalition's mission is to improve the quality of life for older adults through collective advocacy, education, and public policy work. **Learn more at nccoalitiononaging.org.**

PHI QUALITY CARE THROUGH QUALITY JOBS

PHI works to transform eldercare and disability services. We foster dignity, respect, and independence—for all who receive care, and all who provide it. As the nation's leading authority on the direct care workforce, PHI promotes quality direct care jobs as the foundation for quality care. **Learn more at PHInational.org.**

* PHI. (2020). "Workforce Data Center." https://phinational.org/policy-research/workforce-data-center/

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