

Kaine Leads Introduction of Bill to Support Direct Care Workforce & Family Caregivers

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today, U.S. Senator Tim Kaine, a member of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee, led the reintroduction of the *Supporting Our Direct Care Workforce and Family Caregivers Act*, legislation to support the recruitment, training, and retention of direct care workers and family caregivers.

"Families throughout Virginia and across America rely on the support of our direct care workers and family caregivers," **said Kaine**. "When these workers aren't able to stay in their field, those families—and our economy—suffer. That's why I'm leading this legislation to help us address the root causes of shortages in our care system and ensure that our hardworking direct care workers and family caregivers can keep delivering their much-needed services."

Low wages and high turnover have long contributed to staffing shortages in the direct care workforce, which provides crucial support to older Americans, people with disabilities, and other individuals with chronic conditions. Direct care workers include home health and personal care aides and certified nursing assistants who provide long-term care services. Family caregivers are individuals who provide at-home assistance—such as help feeding, grooming, or providing transportation—to a family member, partner, or friend. In 2021, the **median hourly wage** for direct care workers in Virginia was \$12.34. Now, with a growing number of older adults and people with disabilities in the U.S., shortages threaten to impact even more families.

Investments in recruitment and retention strategies such as better pay and benefits, education and training enhancements, and better career advancement opportunities can help address the workforce shortage and help more families get the care they need. Specifically, the *Supporting Our Direct Care Workforce and Family Caregivers Act* would:

- Direct the Department of Health and Human Services, through the Administration on Community Living (ACL), to award grants to states or other eligible entities for initiatives to build, retain, train, and otherwise promote the direct care workforce and to provide grants for states or other eligible entities for educational and training support for both paid and unpaid family caregivers.
- Direct ACL to develop a center to offer technical assistance to grant awardees and other entities interested in direct care workforce development and in supporting family caregivers. The assistance at the center includes:
 - Working with states, key stakeholders, and other interested entities to establish career development and advancement strategies for direct care professionals, which may include national standards, recruitment campaigns, pre-apprenticeship and on-the-job training opportunities, apprenticeship programs, specializations or certifications, or other activities.
 - Exploring the workforce shortage areas for direct care professionals.
 - Developing recommendations for training and education curricula for direct care professionals and family caregivers.
 - Disseminating information and best practices from lessons learned through the grants.

To read the bill text for the *Supporting Our Direct Care Workforce and Family Caregivers Act*, click [here](#).

Kaine was joined in the introduction by U.S. Senators Bob Casey (D-PA), Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY), Maggie Hassan (D-NH), Jack Reed (D-RI), Tina Smith (D-MN), Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI), and Ron Wyden (D-OR).

This legislation is supported by the American Association on Health and Disability, American Network of Community Options and Resources (ANCOR), the Arc of the United States, A Better Balance, Care In Action, Caring Across Generations, Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP), Cure SMA, Economic Policy Institute, Family Values @ Work, Hand in Hand: The Domestic Employers Network, Justice in Aging, Lakeshore Foundation, the National Alliance for Direct Support Professionals, Inc. (NADSP), PHI, Main Street Alliance, the National Domestic Workers Alliance, National Women's Law Center, and the Service Employees International Union (SEIU).

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