

U.S. SENATOR BOB CASEY



CHAIRMAN Special Committee on Aging

The Long-Term Care Workforce Support Act

U.S. Senators Bob Casey (D-PA), Tim Kaine (D-VA), and Tammy Baldwin (D-WI)

Why do we need the Long-Term Care Workforce Support Act?

As the number of older adults and people with disabilities continue to increase in the country, the number of direct care professionals – including personal care aides, home health aides, direct support professionals, and many others – will also need to increase. The four million direct care professionals currently employed provide services to people living in their homes, in group homes, assisted living facilities, nursing homes, intermediate care facilities and other long-term care settings. Studies also estimate that, by 2031, 9.3 million direct care professionals will be required to meet the caregiving demands of older adults and people with disabilities.

A recent survey revealed 92% of nursing home respondents and nearly 70% of assisted living facilities reported significant or severe workforce shortages. In 2022, a survey of nursing homes showed more than 50% of the facilities were limiting the number of new admissions due to staffing vacancies or shortages. Another recent survey of home and community-based services (HCBS) providers showed all 50 states experiencing home care worker shortages, and 43 states reported that some HCBS providers have closed due to worker shortages.

In 2022, the median hourly wage for all direct care professionals was \$15.43, with home care aides earning \$14.51. One in eight direct care professionals live in poverty, 75% earn less than the average living wage in their state, and 46% rely on public assistance, such as Medicaid, food assistance, or supplemental benefits. In addition to low wages, these workers report high levels of burnout and professional fatigue due to the daily physical and emotional demands of their jobs, lack of respect for the care that they provide, and health and emotional effects from battling the COVID-19 pandemic. Most direct care professionals are women, immigrants, and people of color, further perpetuating racial, gender, and economic inequalities.

What would the Long-Term Care Workforce Support Act do?

Stabilizing, growing, and supporting the direct care professional workforce is essential to ensuring a strong, qualified pipeline of workers to provide needed services to older adults and people with disabilities. Ensuring that direct care professionals are fairly compensated and protected will also benefit them, their families, and their communities.

Specifically, the Long-Term Care Workforce Support Act will:

- Increase the number of direct care professionals, including in rural communities;
- Provide pathways to enter and be supported in the workforce for women, people of color, and people with disabilities;
- Improve compensation for direct care professionals to reduce vacancies and turnover;
- Ensure that the direct care professionals are treated with respect, provided with a safe working environment, protected from exploitation, and provided fair compensation;
- Improve access and quality of long-term care for families;
- Document the need for long-term care, identify effective recruitment and training strategies, and promote practices that help retain direct care professionals.
- Strengthen the direct care professional workforce in order to support the 53,000,000 unpaid family caregivers who are providing complex services to their loved ones in the home and across long-term care settings.

Co-sponsors: Senators Casey (PA), Kaine (VA), Baldwin (WI), Wyden (OR), King (ME), Gillibrand (NY), Fetterman (PA), Duckworth (IL), Heinrich (NM), Welch (VT), Blumenthal (CT), Stabenow (MI), Smith (MN), Van Hollen (MD), Murray (WA), Sanders (VT), Klobuchar (MN), Brown (OH), Butler (CA), and Merkley (OR), Markey (MA), Booker (NJ), Peters (MI), Warren (MA), Cantwell (WA), and Whitehouse (RI).

Endorsing Organizations: Caring Across Generations, the Long Term Care Community Coalition (LTCCC), PHI, the National Alliance for Direct Support Professionals (NADSP), the National Disability Rights Network (NDRN), the National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities (NACDD), the National Organization of Social Security Claimants' Representatives (NOSSCR), Cure SMA, the Gerontological Advanced Practice Nurses Association (GAPNA), the Gerontological Society of America (GSA), the Muscular Dystrophy Association (MDA), the Academy of Doctors of Audiology, the American Academy of Audiology, the American Physical Therapy Association, the Hartford Institute for Geriatric Nursing at New York University, the National Association of State Ombudsman Programs (NASOP), the Council on Social Work Education, the National Association of Social Workers (NASW), the Coalition to End Social Isolation and Loneliness, the American Geriatrics Society (AGS), the National Domestic Workers Alliance (NDWA), Care in Action, the National Coalition on Aging (NCOA), the National Council on Independent Living, the National Respite Coalition, the American Association of Respiratory Care, the Autism Society of America, the Autistic Self Advocacy Network, the American Association on Health and Disability, the National Health Council, the Lakeshore Foundation, Justice in Aging, VOR – Voice of Reason, SEIU, AFSCME, the National Alliance to End Homelessness, the Alliance for Expanding America's Workforce, the National Partnership for Families & Women, Jewish Health Foundation, Association of People Supporting Employment First (APSE), the Center for Excellence in Assisted Living (CEAL@UNC), American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA), RespectAbility, the National Alliance for Caregiving, and the National Disability Institute (NDI).