

The Disability and Aging Collaborative

May 24, 2024

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mike Johnson
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Leaders Schumer and McConnell, Speaker Johnson, and Leader Jeffries,

The undersigned member organizations of the Disability and Aging Collaborative (DAC) and allied organizations write to urge swift passage of the Long-term Care Workforce Support Act (S. 4120 and H.R. 7994) to address the extreme need for more funding to support direct care workers in all settings where aging adults and people with disabilities are served.

The Disability and Aging Collaborative (DAC) is a coalition of approximately 40 national organizations that work together to advance long-term services and support policy at the federal level. Formed in 2009, the DAC was one of the first coordinated efforts to bring together disability, aging, and labor organizations. Together we represent over 7 million people who need services and over 1.5 million direct care workers. The constituencies we represent live in all 50 states and live and work in a variety of different settings, nursing homes, community homes, their own homes or apartments, and intermediate care facilities.

In light of the direct care workforce crisis across all sectors of long term services and supports, we strongly support the multi-year investment across all sectors included in the Long-term Care Workforce Support Act. This act would begin alleviating this crisis, which is necessary to ensure continued access to services for older adults and individuals with disabilities.

Older adults and individuals with disabilities are facing a crisis of care. There is a severe shortage of direct care workers. There is also high turnover among direct care workers because it is an extremely hard job and the pay is low, especially in this inflationary environment. According to a [2023 survey](#) conducted by coalition member the American Network of Community Options and Resources (ANCOR):

- a. 95% of community-based provider organizations who provide support to people with intellectual and developmental disabilities have experienced moderate or severe staffing shortages in the past year.
- b. 44% of these providers have **discontinued** services that individuals with disabilities of all ages need and rely on because of the lack of staff.
- c. 77% of these providers report that they are turning away or not accepting new people that require services.

Allowing these trends to continue will have a catastrophic impact on older adults and individuals with disabilities that we collectively serve. Already, some are not receiving the care they need and in turn, their quality of life has declined. For example, individuals are not receiving the physical therapy they need resulting in a decline in their skills and independence. The constant turnover of direct care workers, who provide the most intimate care including bathing and personal hygiene, wreaks havoc on the mental health of older adults and individuals with disabilities, and the high turnover places additional strain on the direct care workers who remain in the profession, trying to provide the highest quality services.

Service providers, dependent on Medicare and Medicaid to fund their operations, cannot compete for workers with for-profit businesses. Providers cannot raise wages because they have no means to fund the increased wages. The only way providers can raise wages is if the government provides the funding to do so. Additional federal funding is essential to address the staffing crisis and to abate the crisis in care. We want all older adults and individuals with disabilities to live quality lives. They can only do so if there is adequate, stable, high quality staff to provide the care they need. This can only be accomplished through additional federal funding, as proposed in the Long-term Care Workforce Support Act.

Providing funding to address the staffing crisis and improve care will be cost efficient. If the staffing crisis is not adequately addressed, older adults and individuals with disabilities will suffer serious mental and physical declines which will cost more to treat than the cost of addressing the staffing crisis.

The Long-term Care Workforce Support Act will provide multi-year funding that will enable states to raise Medicaid rates to increase wages and benefits for direct care workers, so that providers can attract and retain the workers they need to adequately serve older adults and people with disabilities. The funding is structured so that support for workers is across settings (nursing homes, home and community-based settings, and intermediate care facilities), which is critical because many direct care workers work across settings. The bill will provide multi-year funding to states to enhance the training, retention and recruitment of direct care workers to ensure high quality care. The bill also addresses the workplace safety of long-term care workers.

This historic piece of legislation would create the human infrastructure of a well paid, well trained and supported long-term care workforce. The Disability and Aging Collaborative urges

passage of this legislation that is overdue in addressing the workforce crisis in this country for aging adults, people with disabilities and the direct care workforce. For additional information or questions, feel free to contact DAC co-chairs Nicole Jorwic (nicole@caringacross.org), Natalie Kean (nkean@justiceinaging.org), Howard Bedlin (howard.bedlin@ncoa.org), and David Goldfarb (goldfarb@thearc.org).

Sincerely,

Access Ready Inc.
American Association on Health and Disability
Amputee Coalition
Autism Society of America
Autistic Self Advocacy Network
Care in Action
Caring Across Generations
Coalition on Human Needs
Disability Policy Consortium
Diverse Elders Coalition
Health Care Voices
Institute for Policy Studies, Poverty Project
Justice in Aging
Lakeshore Foundation
Medicare Rights Center
Muscular Dystrophy Association
National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities
National Council on Aging
National Council on Independent Living
National Domestic Workers Alliance
National Employment Law Project
National Health Law Program
New Disabled South
PHI
TASH