

Action Alert: Contact Your State Legislators and the Governor Today

Direct Care Workers are Essential to Home Care, All Care Settings, Industry and Our Economy

WHAT WE KNOW

- The economy depends on caregivers. Families can NOT provide all the caregiving.
- Direct Care Workers (DCWs) provide critical support for older adults, people living with disabilities, and families in their homes and residential communities.
- Direct care work is **skilled** work. There is a profound shortage of DCWs and astronomical turnover. Care Providers are struggling to meet demand. COVID-19 has made it worse. Michigan needs **134K** more **skilled** DCWs right now and 178k DCWs by 2028!
- Recruiting DCWs is nearly impossible. The average hourly wage for DCWs in Michigan is \$10-\$13, depending on the sector. Low wages and a lack of benefits, guaranteed hours, training, and respect mean DCW jobs can't compete with retail or food service work.
- Most DCWs love their job and want to work as a DCW – not in food service/retail. They're forced to work multiple jobs or leave the field.
- To stabilize and grow this essential workforce, DCWs must be respected and compensated commensurate with their skill and critical contribution to the economy. DCWs deserve a living wage, affordable and comprehensive healthcare, paid time off, and competency-based training and credentialing.

THE NEED TO GROW AND STABILIZE THE DCW WORKFORCE IS URGENT

What have State legislators done to address this urgent need? Many legislators understand this critical situation and are committed to improving it. One concrete achievement: State leaders passed a temporary \$2.25/hr. DCW premium pay, funded largely by COVID relief dollars.

What else can State legislators do? Extend and expand the \$2.25/hr. DCW premium pay. Include benefits, sufficient administrative increments, annual cost of living increases tied to inflation, and a special fund to support DCW training leading to a recognized credential.

Extending and expanding the DCW wage increase is just the beginning of what it will take to stabilize and grow this profession. Multiple groups across Michigan are already engaged in initiatives that raise the possibility for dramatic improvements. One example: The MDHHS has established a statewide DCW Advisory Committee of diverse stakeholders including DCWs, providers, consumers, advocates, area agencies on aging, and others, and has 3 important workgroups including one addressing DCW competency, ethical, professional, and training guidelines, credentials, and career pathways. **We all need to work together!**

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP?

- **Learn more about what concrete advocacy is happening across Michigan:** Contact IMPART Alliance for more information at impart@msu.edu or www.impartalliance.org
- **Take Action: Act on the ideas listed on the back of this flier**

Take ACTION!

- **EASY** – Use the facts on the front for talking points any chance you can.
- **EASY** – Distribute this flier to everyone in all your distribution lists and other venues.
- **EASY** - Send the front page to your legislators and other decision makers.
- **EVEN EASIER** - We've developed a letter writing campaign through [resistbot](#), a **free**¹ and widely used text messaging service designed specifically to support civic engagement and advocacy. **To join the campaign, follow these steps:**

1. Text PBIMOS to 50409.

2. You will be asked a number of questions including your name, email address, and home address. This is important, because your home address will help resistbot identify your specific State legislators.
3. Once you submit all your information and agree - the following message will automatically be sent to YOUR legislators. It's as simple as that!

Now, more than ever, we see just how essential direct care workers (DCWs) are to the well-being of older adults and persons living with disabilities. They support our loved ones, our partners, and our neighbors on a daily basis. And yet, DCWs struggle under poverty wages – often under \$12/hour – inadequate benefits like paid time off or health insurance, and a lack of recognition and respect for their critical role in our care economy. It's estimated Michigan will need to fill 178k DCW jobs by 2028 to meet rising demand. We're already seeing the damaging effects of a workforce shortage – persons living with disabilities and older adults unable to secure the support they need to remain healthy and safe within their own communities. Now is the time to act. We must compensate this workforce commensurate with the essential nature of their work, their high level of skill, and their commitment to caring for others. I strongly urge you to support extending and expanding the \$2.25/hour DCW premium pay, including benefits, annual cost of living increases tied to inflation, and a special fund to support DCW training that leads to a recognized credential and career pathway. Together, we can create a care infrastructure that honors older adults, persons living with disabilities, and the direct care workers who we all rely on. Thank you.

- Learn more about what is happening across the state on behalf of DCWs and JOIN in. JOIN the IMPART Alliance statewide DCW Coalition by contacting us at impart@msu.edu or www.impartalliance.org
- Learn more about DCWs at www.phinational.org



¹ While resistbot is a free text messaging service, standard messaging and data rates may apply.