



**Public Comments
Appropriations Subcommittee on Health and Human Services
on the challenges of Direct Care Workers
November, 2021**

Dear Chairwoman Whiteford,

Michigan Direct Care workers and long-term care providers appreciate your attention and the support that you have provided throughout the Covid-19 Pandemic. The Direct Care Worker shortage continues but there are opportunities that we have as a state to better help and support our healthcare heroes.

It takes a team to care for an individual in a healthcare setting and the Direct Care Wage Pass-through Program has provided ongoing worker support through the pandemic. However, the program bypasses many workers who are essential to the care of our residents across long term care settings. Individuals such as housekeepers, maintenance staff and social workers continue to face the same daily challenges but have been deemed ineligible due to the narrow definition of a direct care giver. We ask that you consider these individuals as direct care workers in any future or current direct care giver support programs.

Many individuals who stepped to serve during the COVID-19 pandemic are underpaid and undervalued. Those who served as temporary nurse aides during the first and second waves remain ineligible for the \$2.35 wage pass-through because they operate only under a temporary license. These workers have attended the same trainings and should be acknowledged for delivering the same work as those currently covered under the direct care wage pass-through program.

The lack of career ladders for Michigan's direct care workforce continues to remain a significant challenge. Many leave the profession to seek more lucrative opportunities while younger workers understandably fail to view the profession as a viable long-term career. Because of the rigid training and certification requirements for healthcare jobs, long-term care providers cannot easily create roles for their staff to advance or offer them a clear vision for their future.

Michigan should seriously consider legislation that would allow for the use of medication aides in nursing homes along with other innovative opportunities for advancement. With appropriate training and more role flexibility in current professional categories, we would better meet both the need for qualified staff and help raise many employees up out of poverty.

Thank you,

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