



PRESS RELEASE
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**DIRECT CARE WORKERS TO CONGRESS: WE CAN'T REFORM HEALTH CARE
UNTIL WE REFORM DIRECT CARE JOBS**

*At the top of the Direct Care Alliance agenda: minimum wage and overtime pay
for home care aides*

Washington, D.C. – This week, direct care worker, consumer, and employer constituents of the Direct Care Alliance (DCA), the national advocacy voice of direct care workers, will join DCA board members on Capitol Hill to visit Members of Congress. They will advocate for three DCA health care reform principles and an immediate fix to the federal Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), which excludes home care aides from minimum wage and overtime protection.

“Today, direct care workers begin to end decades of invisibility,” says DCA Executive Director Leonila Vega. “Workers and their allies from Pennsylvania to Texas are visiting their elected representatives to deliver the DCA message: We cannot reform health care until we reform direct care jobs.”

Direct care workers – home health and home care aides, nursing assistants, personal care attendants, and other frontline workers – are rarely mentioned in discussions about health care reform, but two facts place them at the heart of the issue. First, they are the backbone of our nation’s long-term care system, providing essential services and support to more than 15 million Americans. Second, they are twice as likely as the average American worker to be uninsured.

“Direct service workers will soon be one of the largest workforces in the U.S.— larger than the number of primary and secondary teachers combined; larger than the total number of firefighters and police officers,” says Renee Pietrangelo, executive director of ANCOR (the American Network of Community Options and Resources), who will speak at a reception hosted by the DCA on April 27. “The DCA is raising awareness among policymakers about the crucial role this workforce plays – both in meeting the needs of elders and people with disabilities and in fueling economic growth.”

In addition to hands-on care and assistance with daily activities, direct care workers bring stability, peace of mind, freedom, and positive energy to the lives of the people they support. Many describe what they do as a calling, a spiritually rewarding way of giving and receiving love. But as a way to make a living, it leaves a lot to be desired. In Washington, the DCA teams will ask their representatives to address the low wages, inadequate training, low rates of health insurance, and lack of career advancement opportunities that make it difficult for direct care workers to remain in their chosen profession. They will also ask legislators to support an immediate fix to the FLSA.

The Direct Care Alliance is the national advocacy voice of direct care workers: the home care and home health aides, personal care attendants, nursing assistants, direct support professionals, and other frontline workers who provide essential care, services, and support to elders and people with disabilities and chronic conditions. We empower workers to speak out for better wages, benefits, working conditions, and respect, in order to improve their quality of life and to promote direct care as a viable career opportunity.

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