

The Direct Care Job Quality Improvement Act

Direct Care Workers: On the Frontlines of Long-Term Care

The number of Americans needing long-term care is expected to double in the coming decades—from 13 million in 2000 to 27 million in 2050. The vast majority—70-80 percent—of paid care will be provided by direct care workers, who are indispensable to our nation's long-term care system. Despite providing care and services that help millions of elderly people with chronic conditions and people living with disabilities maintain their dignity and autonomy, most direct care workers receive low wages, little or no benefits and insufficient training and professional development. As a result, this profession is plagued by high turnover rates that **compromise the quality of care for the people they serve.**

Many factors contribute to the poor compensation and lack of respect that direct care workers endure:

- Gender bias: nearly 90 percent of direct care workers are women, and occupations that are predominately filled by women are poorly compensated.
- A lack of understanding and appreciation for the importance of the care provided by direct care workers.
- Medicaid (49%) and Medicare (21%) finance the majority of the long-term care provided in the country, and reimbursements are so low that they often prevent even full-time workers from earning a living wage.

Better Jobs and Care for the Future

Poor wages and benefits for direct care workers results in extraordinarily high turnover rates. This recurring dynamic is detrimental to our long-term care system: many quality workers are pursuing other careers because they can't afford to remain in the industry; care quality suffers for consumers because of the lack of continuity, and employers incur the additional



expenses associated with recruiting and training new workers.

Tell Congress to Pass H.R. 2341/S. 1273: The Direct Care Job Quality Improvement Act

With job creation and economic recovery the top priority for 2011, let's answer this call by supporting one of our nation's fastest growing industries. This bill will help create a stable, valued direct care workforce and increase the quality of care for millions of Americans.

The Direct Care Job Quality Improvement Act will:

- Extend **wage and overtime protections** provided through the Fair Labor Standards Act to home care workers.
- Establish **data collection and reporting requirements** to monitor important workforce indicators such as size, compensation levels, turnover rates and vacancies.
- Improve the **recruitment and retention** of direct care workers by providing grants to states to expand and support efforts aimed at recruiting, training and retaining an adequate supply of direct care workers.