

Improved Care Supports for the Disability Community

BACKGROUND

The disability community lacks the adequate support needed to live their lives independently in their homes and in their communities. Necessary and life-saving changes need to happen in the home and community care support landscape for all people living with disabilities. In particular, wheelchair users and people with mobility disabilities are in urgent need of care supports due to the crisis shortage of care workers, the multi-year COVID-19 pandemic (and the effects of Long COVID), as well as the increase of the senior population. Issues to address include:

- *access to care support workers/professionals especially for those living in rural areas;*
- *availability of qualified care support workers/professionals;*
- *potential cultural bias or barriers in the assessment process such as meal schedules or language, cultural or religious accommodations;*
- *caregiver accountability regarding arrival and departure times;*
- *cleaning and disinfecting best practices to limit the transmission of infections as well as respecting the individual's needs and preferences;*
- *lack of insurance coverage for services at certain income levels; and,*
- *the complex process of navigating the Medicare, Medicaid and other health insurance systems.*

WHAT WE ARE WORKING ON

A Reliable, Accountable, Professional Care Support Team

- Raise wages for direct support professionals through Medicare/Medicaid reimbursement rates
- Provide student loan forgiveness opportunities
- Allow for family members (including spouses and parents) to participate in paid caregiver/care support programs
- Expedite services and streamline enrollment processes for those in most need

A Robust and Supported Workforce

- Work with education organizations as well as credentialing/licensure and certification, apprenticeship and internship opportunities to bolster and supplement the workforce
- Provide options for a grace period when having to switch service providers
- Establish oversight for workers and providers in the private and public sector:
 - Training opportunities/opportunities to switch when service providers/workers do not meet the needs of the individual
 - Expiration of certifications/care support professional grants
 - Funding incentives

A Clear and Simple Self-Directed (Person-Centered) HCBS Plan

- Live in your own home and/or community
- Allows for consideration of personal preferences and customizable services alongside health and safety needs
- Choose your own care support worker and/or service provider
- Provide opportunities to improve health, wellness and fitness programs to achieve greater functional outcomes for individuals to live more independently and integrate more into their communities