



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Pa. faces a human services workforce crisis. Only lawmakers can fix it.

State government is sitting on billions of dollars in surplus revenue as the crisis worsens & needs go unmet

HARRISBURG, Pa. (Feb. 9, 2022) --- COVID-19 has worsened a workforce crisis that affects nearly every human services field, putting Pennsylvania's most vulnerable residents at risk.

A coalition of providers and their associations is banding together to ensure adequate funding for direct support professionals and mental health practitioners to protect programs and services for those in need and to provide the critical support that families deserve.

Most human services professionals are paid less than \$15 per hour, which simply isn't competitive, especially for challenging jobs that require great skill to master and specialized training to carry out, and where workers in many cases perform life-sustaining tasks.

Staff turnover is epidemic. Open positions remain unfilled. Vacancy rates are at all-time highs. Direct support professionals and mental health practitioners who remain on the job are working longer hours --- nights, weekends, overnights, overtime. Many are burned out and moving on.

Family members have had to quit their jobs to fulfill the role that direct support professionals once provided. With fewer mental health practitioners, many individuals in crisis are finding it harder to access care or going without services entirely.

Because human services are funded primarily by Medicaid, providers cannot raise prices like private businesses to pay higher wages in order to attract and retain a highly skilled workforce. **State lawmakers have a role to play.**

Pennsylvania is sitting on billions of federal dollars and state "rainy day" funds that could increase wages to retain workers and attract and train a new workforce. Yet, even amid this worsening crisis, the money remains unspent as the needs of vulnerable residents go unmet.

Unless lawmakers act, providers will have no choice but to cut services or eliminate programs, as some already have, because there simply aren't enough workers to fill these positions, meaning the situation will only grow worse.

For more information, visit www.DirectCareWorks.com.

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