

The Direct Creation, Advancement, and Retention of Employment (CARE) Opportunity Act of 2021 (H.R. 2999)

Direct care workers provide daily assistance to millions of older Americans, people with disabilities, and others with chronic care needs. Direct care workers include personal care aides, home health aides, and nursing assistants. These workers are the backbone of the long-term care workforce and assist individuals with daily tasks by preparing meals, managing medications, providing transportation, and providing much needed relief for family caregivers. The direct care workforce is essential to ensuring older Americans and people with disabilities live with dignity and independence.

There is a growing demand for direct care and but not enough workers to meet the demand. The population age 65 and older increased from 38.8 million in 2008 to 52.4 million in 2018 (a 35 percent increase) and is projected to reach [94.7 million in 2060](#). Further, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), [one in four adults](#), or 61 million Americans is currently living with a disability. Between 2018 and 2028, the direct care workforce is projected to [add more than 1.3 million new jobs](#).

Direct care workers care for and support some of our nation's most vulnerable people. However, the workforce itself is also vulnerable to low wages, difficult working conditions, and economic insecurity. [Nine in ten direct care workers are women, half are people are color, and a quarter are immigrants](#). Many direct care workers do not have education beyond high school and lack access to a career pathway or advanced training. The rate of injury among direct care workers is over [three times higher](#) than other professions while the current median wage for direct care workers is [just under \\$13 an hour](#). [One in six workers lives in poverty](#) and 44 percent of direct care workers rely on some form of public assistance to support themselves and their families.

To meet the growing demand for direct care workers, improve working conditions, and create greater economic opportunity, Congress should invest in the workforce that cares for millions of people every day.

The *Direct CARE Opportunity Act* addresses the need for a prepared, well-trained, and empowered direct care workforce now and for the future. The *Direct CARE Opportunity Act*:

- Provides funding to states and entities to invest in strategies to recruit, retain and advance the direct care workforce pipeline;
- Implements models and strategies to make the field of direct care more attractive, such as training and registered apprenticeships, career pathways, or mentoring, allowing for local and regional innovation to address workforce shortages and needs in a high-demand field;
- Encourages retention and career advancement in the growing field of direct care;
- Responds to the needs of a growing aging population and allows older Americans, people with disabilities, and others who require direct care services to remain in their communities, when possible; and
- Supports the health and wellbeing of those who need and rely on direct care services, helping to prevent costlier institutional care.