

We Need Fair Pay 4 Home Care



The New York Caring Majority is a campaign of seniors, people with disabilities, family caregivers, and home care workers from across the state. We are organizing for a sustainable and just caring economy that will help all New Yorkers who give and who receive care live fuller and healthier lives. *We're working to change the way New York cares.*

Our goals are:

- To make long-term care services and supports affordable and accessible to all New Yorkers who require additional support to live independently; and
- To improve the quality of home care jobs and create the caregiving jobs we will need to meet growing demand.

As the population of older adults grows, so does the need for caregiving and an improved system to provide home and community-based long-term care services and supports. However, New York's care infrastructure is woefully inadequate, and our policies and programs have yet to catch up with our state's changing realities, and as a result, many of our families are struggling.

The home care workforce is key to ensuring New Yorkers can access quality care in their homes, but we are experiencing a workforce shortage that will only grow if we don't take action. Between 2018 and 2028, there will be over 780,000 job openings for home health and personal care aides in New York - a number the state is unprepared to fill. Despite the essential nature of the services that home care workers provide (which has been highlighted by the pandemic), they experience poor job quality, which contributes to the high turnover in this field. Median annual earnings for home care workers in New York is \$19,200. That's so low that about half live in or near poverty, relying upon public benefits to make ends meet. In addition to wages, problems with transportation, especially in rural parts of the state, uneven and erratic scheduling, lack of career advancement opportunities, and lack of benefits contribute to the challenge of recruiting and retaining workers.

Among the many tragic consequences of the pandemic, the COVID-related deaths in nursing homes has been one of the most shocking, not only because of the proportion of deaths occurring in nursing homes in NY State, but because if people had been in their homes instead of institutions, widespread transmission, and therefore death, would have been much more difficult.

Our lack of investment in this workforce is also an equity issue. Over 90% of NY's home care workforce is female, almost 80% are immigrants, and over 80% are people of color.

If we don't improve the quality of home care jobs, the workforce shortage will worsen, causing consumers to resort to institutional care — which is often not the preferred setting (especially during the pandemic) and is more expensive. Further, we will continue to suffer the economic consequences of under-investing in a workforce with the leading amount of job growth and job openings in the state.

New York Caring Majority is:

A Better Balance
Caring Across Generations
Consumer Directed Personal Assistance Association of New York State
Cooperative Home Care Associates
FPWA
Hand in Hand: The Domestic Employers Network
Jews for Racial & Economic Justice
National Domestic Workers Alliance
National Employment Law Project
New York Association on Independent Living

FY 2022 Budget Recommendations

This moment presents an opportunity to finally recognize the essential nature of the home care workforce, both during the COVID-19 crisis and beyond it. Home care is a vital, high-skill job, and now is the time to value it as such. Across New York, we need to recruit hundreds of thousands of new home care workers. Doing so will help us meet our population's care needs and, in the face of historic job loss across sectors, will help reinvigorate the economy and save laid off workers from long-term unemployment. Now is the time to invest in good jobs in the home care field—jobs that support those who need care and strengthen the health and economic conditions of our communities.

ELIMINATE OR ADJUST THE 'GLOBAL CAP' ON MEDICAID SPENDING

Medicaid's self-imposed austerity limits are acting as a blockade and ensuring that those who most need services - seniors and people with disabilities - are held hostage to the budget negotiations. The artificial Global Cap only serves as a limit because policy makers allow it to. We can – and must – flip this script and find the resources needed to allow everyone to live and age in their own homes and communities.

INVEST IN THE HOME CARE WORKFORCE: INCREASE WORKER PAY TO 150% OF MINIMUM WAGE

The system is broken - this is the time for bold solutions, not band aids. To ensure that seniors and people with disabilities are able to get the services they need, New York must overhaul our attitude and approach to paying for home care. In 2006, home care workers were on average paid 150% of the minimum wage. Today, the majority are paid at or just slightly above the minimum wage, while earning less than the legally required minimum wage for the fast food sector. Almost a quarter billion in Medicaid cuts to home care and CDPA over the past two years have eliminated any margin for bolstering wages outside of direct Medicaid reimbursements. Medicaid reimbursements have remained stagnant for years, while the cost of living continues to rise. In many cases, workers in these critical positions have actually seen wages fall, rather than rise, even during the pandemic.

To rebuild long-term care in a way that prioritizes community-based services and the workforce, home care workers must be paid a minimum of 150% of their current regional minimum wage. This will allow for greater recruitment of a home care workforce and encourage workers to remain in rewarding jobs providing critical care rather than making the tough choice to change industries due to poverty level wages. By addressing the workforce shortage in this way, New York will come into compliance with Federal requirements around access to services. During a pandemic that has disproportionately claimed the lives of people living in nursing homes, New York must modernize its long-term care strategy.

INVEST IN THE HOME CARE WORKFORCE: CREATE THE HOME CARE JOBS AND INNOVATION FUND

As New York's home care providers struggle to recruit and retain workers, they lack the resources to test innovative solutions to this problem. New York can lead the country in finding innovative ways to improve job quality in the home care sector, and improve recruitment and retention of a qualified home care workforce, including family and friends filling positions as paid caregivers. Money invested in home care is re-invested locally, while providing an important service in our communities.

This year's budget should include funding to support pilot projects throughout the state that boost the number of home care workers that enter and remain in the field. The findings from these projects can help determine statewide solutions. We recommend that the [Home Care Jobs Innovation Fund](#) is funded at \$15 million over three years.

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