

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

**HELP ENSURE ADEQUATE WAGES FOR THOSE WHO  
SUPPORT INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES IN THEIR  
COMMUNITIES**

*Co-sponsor The Direct Support Professionals Fairness and Security Act of  
2005 (H.R. 1264)*

July 27, 2005

Dear Colleague:

Before you leave for the August recess, we wanted to call your attention to an issue that you may be asked about by constituents in your home districts -- an issue for which we know you share deep concern.


There are approximately 54 million Americans with disabilities, with 13 million of them requiring long-term supports. The Supreme Court, Congress, President Bush, Governors, and other federal and state policymakers have joined in agreement with people with disabilities, their families, community providers and others that our nation must adopt a long-term support system based on people having the choice to live and work in their communities. However, we must address the major barrier to realizing the success of this national goal. The dedicated professionals who provide these supports deserve adequate wages compensation for the important service they provide to your family members, your neighbors, and your nation.

That's the reason we have introduced the "Direct Support Professionals Fairness and Security Act of 2005" (H.R. 1264). Our bill would help empower states to reimburse community-based organizations provide adequate wages necessary to attract, train, and retain the direct support workforce so that people with disabilities can live and work in their communities. Under our bill, states could voluntarily apply for additional federal Medicaid money to reimburse private providers to enable them to raise wages.

This legislation is necessary because of several factors, including an increased demand for long-term supports and services, a nationwide shift towards individualized home and community supports instead of institutional services, and the problems of keeping a qualified workforce in play. Unlike other sectors of the private market, the formal long-term supports system is almost entirely dependent upon public financing -- particularly Medicaid funding -- that not only underfunds the true costs of services, but also varies considerably. Wages and benefits for direct support professionals are far below the trends of other comparable job categories and the national minimum wage. As a consequence, these lower wages mean higher rates of turnover and increased vacancies in direct support positions.

To request more information or to co-sponsor the legislation, please contact Jeremy Sharp ([jeremy.sharp@mail.house.gov](mailto:jeremy.sharp@mail.house.gov)) in Mrs. Capps' office at 5-3601 or Jennifer Roberts ([jennifer.roberts@mail.house.gov](mailto:jennifer.roberts@mail.house.gov)) in Mr. Terry's office at 5-4155.

Sincerely,

  
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