



Wisconsin Personal Services Association, Inc.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Wisconsin Personal Services Association Calls on the Joint Finance Committee to Address the Direct Care Workforce Crisis

The Wisconsin Personal Services Association (WPSA) -- the longest standing professional organization for personal care and other home care providers in Wisconsin- calls on the Joint Finance Committee to support a 15% increase to the personal care rate.

Access to personal care services is essential to ensuring that people with disabilities and older adults are able to remain living in the community. Unfortunately, many personal care agencies cannot afford to continue providing personal care services. Approximately 60 agencies have closed or downsized in recent years. Thirty-one percent of WPSA member agencies surveyed report that they are currently considering either closing or downsizing, citing the reimbursement rate for personal care as the determining factor.

The reimbursement rate for personal care services has only increased by \$0.24 over the past 14 years, and there have been no rate increases since 2008, said WPSA President Darci Knapp. Governor Walker's proposed 2% per year increase is an important first step in addressing the crisis but additional investments are needed to put personal care rates on a sustainable path.

WPSA has heard from its member agencies that the current reimbursement rate results in low wages which makes it difficult to retain direct care workers. Ninety-three percent of WPSA agencies report difficulty finding workers and some agencies report turnover rates as high as 67%.

The current reimbursement rate cannot support personal care agencies, personal care workers or personal care consumers, said WPSA Legislative Co-Chair Todd Costello. Wisconsin must address the direct care workforce crisis to ensure that people with disabilities and complex medical conditions can live safely in the community.

The personal care program is cost-effective and essential to supporting people with disabilities and older adults in the community. If personal care services are not available, many people will be forced to turn to more expensive institutional care, such as nursing homes or institutions, which pose a significant cost to state taxpayers.

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