Dear Senator XXXXX or Representative XXXXX

I am writing to encourage your support for the provisions of the American Jobs Plan that **improve wages and benefits for homecare workers and increase access to homecare services.**

As a homecare provider, my colleagues and I support the basic life services that allow people with disabilities and seniors to remain safely in their homes. Our services allow mothers, daughters, sons and husbands to work outside the home providing essential services such as educating children, providing medical care, stocking grocery shelves, delivering packages and emptying trash bins. For many families, we are the infrastructure that supports their lives and livelihoods.

Everyday homecare workers across the country ensure that the most vulnerable members of our society can get out of bed in the morning, have food to eat, are bathed and clothed, live in clean and safe home environments and have social interaction critical to maintaining a happy and healthy life. Homecare workers are often the first line of defense in identifying and preventing catastrophic health events. However, because of a system of racial and gender inequity that continues today, homecare workers are living paycheck-to-paycheck, with wages at or just above the minimum wage. Given our importance to society, homecare providers should not have to struggle with low pay, poor training and lack of respect.

I am (insert title: executive administrator/director; board chair; worker-owner) of a worker-owned homecare cooperative serving (Type of client: Medicaid, private pay, or Medicaid and private pay) clients in and around (City/Town and State). We struggle to attract caregivers to meet the demand for our services because (Medicaid reimbursement rates depress the salary and benefits we can offer, or most of our private pay clients are limited by the amount they can pay out of pocket).

The dangerously low Medicaid reimbursement rates provided for homecare services resigns these valuable workers to economically precarious lives. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the median annual wage for a direct care worker is about $27,000. While that is an impoverishing wage for the worker, it is a staggering amount for most families and seniors to pay out of pocket. Addressing the needs of caregivers should not pit workers against clients and their families.

With 42 percent of the direct care workforce currently receiving public assistance, it is imperative to raise wages and expand benefits for workers in the caregiving profession. Currently, our caregivers receiving public assistance are unable to work additional hours due to the risk of losing their food, medical, and childcare benefits, basic necessities they cannot replace by working longer hours at the current pay rate. This is a self-defeating system.

The direct care profession is facing an existential crisis. Without significant intervention, the direct care workforce will fall far short of demand. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, between 2018-2028 homecare will add nearly 1.1 million jobs, which represents the largest growth of any job sector in the U.S. During the same time, an additional 6.9 million direct care jobs will need to be filled as existing workers leave the field or exit the labor force.

Improving pay and benefits alone will not fill those positions; care workers need additional training, a career ladder and greater control over their work environment. In a handful of communities, homecare workers have founded worker-owned cooperatives to address some of these needs. Homecare cooperatives and other highroad employers are important to developing the workers’ voice and creating a workplace that considers caregivers’ experiences and needs, which drives retention and improves the quality of care. The annual benchmarking survey of homecare cooperatives conducted by The ICA Group shows higher wages and better working conditions at worker-owned and controlled businesses, resulting in significantly lower caregiver turnover rates, resulting in higher quality, more consistent care for patients. However, in a market dominated by government Medicaid payments, the cooperative model cannot move the needle enough on wages and benefits to change the financial circumstances of caregivers—action at the federal level can.

I would welcome the opportunity to further discuss these much needed reforms in the homecare sector and the benefits that the cooperative model brings to providers and our patients. You can also find more information on homecare cooperatives at <https://www.cdf.coop/homecare-cooperative-initiative>. Thank you for your consideration of this important provision of the American Jobs Plan.

Sincerely

Name

Title

Business