



Wisconsin Personal Services Association, Inc.

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People with Disabilities, Caregivers and Providers Ask Joint Finance Committee to Save Personal Care

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 24, 2019

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Survey results released by the Wisconsin Personal Services Association (WPSA) Wednesday found that 100% of personal care agencies surveyed have had to turn away older adults and people with disabilities in need of care due to a crisis-level shortage of workers. Northeast Wisconsin residents directly impacted by the crisis responded by asking the Joint Finance Committee to increase the Medicaid personal care rate by at least 11% to prevent the collapse of the state's personal care provider network.

“Because of the caregiver crisis I have had to forgo showers, miss or be late for work meetings, and sometimes have not had cares altogether,” said Stephanie Birmingham, a 31 year-old Green Bay resident with a physical disability who receives caregiving services.

A major contributing factor to the crisis is that the personal care rate has been underfunded for decades. This rate helps fund Medicaid personal care services-- in-home supports designed to keep older adults and people with disabilities independent and living in their own homes.

“My agency and others like us feel like we are drowning,” said Linda Bova, owner of Helping Hands Caregivers, a personal care agency based in Green Bay. “On any given day we have approximately 20+ hours of care that we can't provide because we can't find a worker. This means that there are over 600 hours per month of support that we can't provide to a population that just can't live independently without personal care.”

Wisconsin is currently experiencing a personal care workforce shortage so severe that it is jeopardizing the health, safety and welfare of older adults and people with disabilities. The WPSA survey also revealed that the crisis poses an imminent threat to our state's provider network. More than half (60%) of personal care agencies surveyed said they are considering no longer providing Medicaid services due to the inadequate reimbursement rate, which is approximately \$2 less than the cost of providing care.

The personal care shortage has resulted in family members of older adults and people with disabilities taking on a greater share of caregiving duties. Many fear that if action is not taken now to address the crisis, they will have no other choice but to move their loved ones out of their own home and into a more restrictive setting.

“Due to the workforce crisis, my father had many hours during the day when he was left unattended. To ensure his safety, I had to pick up more caretaking duties because of the crisis,” said Laura Josephs, a Green Bay resident who provides caregiving services to her ailing father.

The Wisconsin Personal Services Association (WPSA) is the state’s leading professional organization for personal care and other community-based home care providers. WPSA has educated, advocated, and united agencies and individuals in all Wisconsin counties for over 25 years to provide quality personal/supportive home care services to over 10,000 consumers and as many, if not more, direct care workers.

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