

Legislation Text

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Authorizing Council's Committee on Health and Human Services to hold hearings concerning the quality, stability and sustainability of Direct Support Professionals, who provide critically needed care to individuals of all ages with behavioral health, developmental and physical disabilities.

WHEREAS, Direct Support Professionals provide critically needed services to thousands of Philadelphians who have behavioral health, developmental, and/or physical disabilities, including autism, and include staff who work directly with consumers in residential, day, employment services and support programs; and

WHEREAS, Direct Support Professionals work with a variety of individuals spanning a wide diversity of capabilities, to assist them with securing meaningful jobs, finding appropriate housing arrangements, learning to navigate public transportation systems and/or engaging in social activities; and

WHEREAS, The services of Direct Support Professionals give people with behavior health, developmental and or physical disabilities real choices, to work, live and socialize in their communities, to realize their dreams, to transform their lives and to be included in the everyday lives of their neighborhoods; and

WHEREAS, Human service organizations, that are overwhelmingly nonprofits, and under contract with the state and the City to provide critically needed services to these vulnerable populations, train, employ, and rely on Direct Support Professionals to; and

WHEREAS, Since individuals with disabilities, autism, behavioral health conditions (mental health and drug and alcohol dependence) and their families, depend on Direct Support Professionals to meet their health, safety and daily needs for successful functioning across their lifespan, Direct Support Professionals must have adequate training, remuneration and stable job situations in order to successfully meet the goals of their clients; and

WHEREAS, Despite City Council's support of a minimum wage increase and other initiatives, a comprehensive workforce development approach is needed that includes salary, commitment to public sector, training, and retention strategies for human service providers to continue to meet the increasing demand for the services of Direct Service Professionals; and

WHEREAS, Over 85% of a human service organization's budget is spent on staff and given these organizations have limited sources of funding, they have had no recourse but to keep wages of an already underpaid workforce flat, reduce other spending related to workforce support and development to the level that the Direct Support Professional workforce has exceptionally high levels of turnover and vacancies. Moreover rates that are well below the cost of service provision to human service organizations has resulted in a Direct Support Professional workforce that is often paid poverty level wages;

WHEREAS, The demand for and the responsibilities of the Direct Support Professional are increasingly related to federal and state mandates and investment in the development of the knowledge, competencies and skill-sets of this critical workforce to build capacity to meet current and future regulations; and

WHEREAS, The City of Philadelphia should establish more partnerships within government, business and academic communities to develop and prepare a Direct Support Professional workforce for the challenges of the future; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That it hereby authorizes the Committee on Health and Human Services to hold hearings concerning the quality, stability and sustainability of Direct Support Professionals, who provide critically needed care to individuals of all ages with behavioral health, developmental and physical disabilities.