



DCW COALITION TOOLKIT



LET'S MAKE THIS EASY.

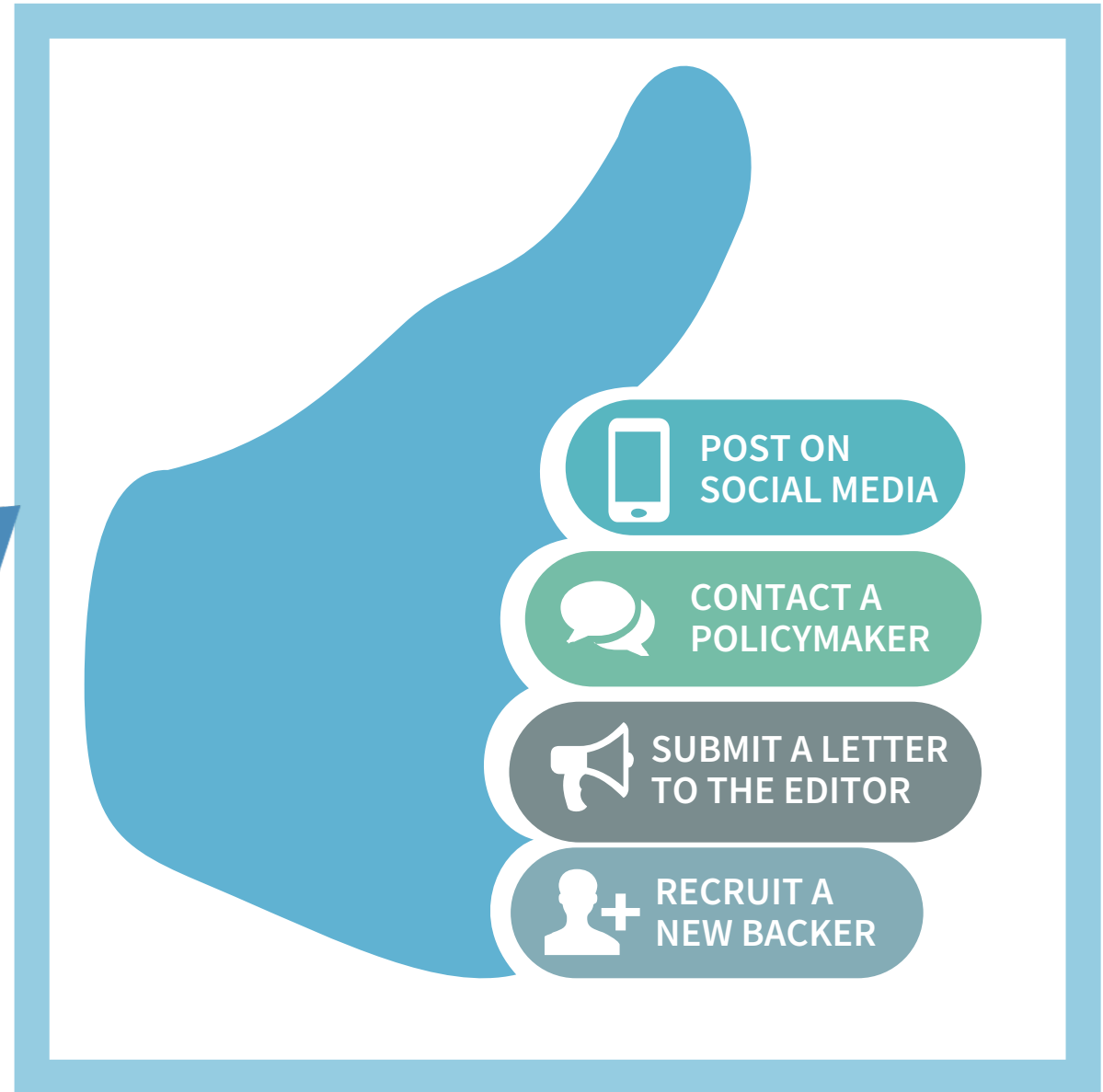
So you can readily show your support for better direct care worker compensation, we're offering ready-made tools for sharing accurate information and advocacy.

Please voice your strong enthusiasm for direct care support as often as you can!

COALITION MEMBER ACTIVITIES

Here's everything we need you to do, rendered as one simple graphic memory aid (see, we told you this would be easy).

We even put the items in order—by how often we hope you'll be thinking about them.



SOCIAL MEDIA TIPS & ASSETS



SOCIAL MEDIA TIPS

- **Be purposeful in your posting.**

Social media is designed to engage people in conversation. Before you post, ask yourself whether the information you're sharing helps you advance the conversation in a way that makes sense and supports your objectives.

- **Use visual content.**

Images, GIFs and videos are more likely to get noticed and shared. You have a strong story to tell, so be sure to use videos, photos, and other visual assets.

- **Tagging lawmakers boosts visibility.**

Adding a social media tag will help draw notice from specific policy leaders and can increase views. **Click [HERE](#) to get lawmaker handles!**

- **Stay positive and constructive.**

Whether posting or commenting, be sure to think carefully about what you're saying. Be polite and professional in your words, exercise clear judgment, and don't let social media trolling get you down.

- **Amplify, amplify, amplify!**

Look for content from like-minded organizations and individuals, and retweet/repost it with your own thoughts.



SOCIAL MEDIA TIPS

Most Important Policy Leaders to Tag in June 2023:

Sen.	Winnie	Brinks	https://www.facebook.com/SenatorBrinks	https://twitter.com/WinnieBrinks	https://www.instagram.com/brinkswinnie/
Sen.	Sarah	Anthony	https://www.facebook.com/SenSarahAnthony	https://twitter.com/SarahAnthony517	https://www.instagram.com/sarahanthony517/
Rep.	Joe	Tate	https://www.facebook.com/SpeakerJoeTate	https://twitter.com/SpeakerJoeTate	
Rep.	Angela	Witwer	https://www.facebook.com/AngelaKWitwer	https://twitter.com/AngelaMIHouse	https://www.instagram.com/angelamistatehouse/
Gov.	Gretchen	Whitmer	https://www.facebook.com/GretchenWhitmer	https://twitter.com/GovWhitmer	https://www.instagram.com/gewhitmer/

POST CLIPS TO SOCIAL MEDIA

- **Interview the DCWs you know, as well as family members and friends.**

Capture short video clips telling you, in their own words, what DCW support means in their lives. Make it short, compelling, and to the point.

- **Post and tag a lawmaker or two.**

When you do, you'll help share the story of DCWs and their needs and help ensure strong funding for the future.

- **Repeat!**

Consider repeating the process every week or so. It will help increase awareness of the need for increased DCW funding.



TIPS FOR POSTING A “SELFIE” VIDEO

- **Choose the right background.**

Make sure it's simple, clean and free of objects and images that you don't wish the entire world to see.

- **Check your lighting.**

Make sure your face isn't in shadow, or that you have a bright light/window behind you. Nothing is worse than watching a dark silhouette!

- **Record horizontally.**

This helps with video quality and sharing.

- **Make sure your voice can be heard.**

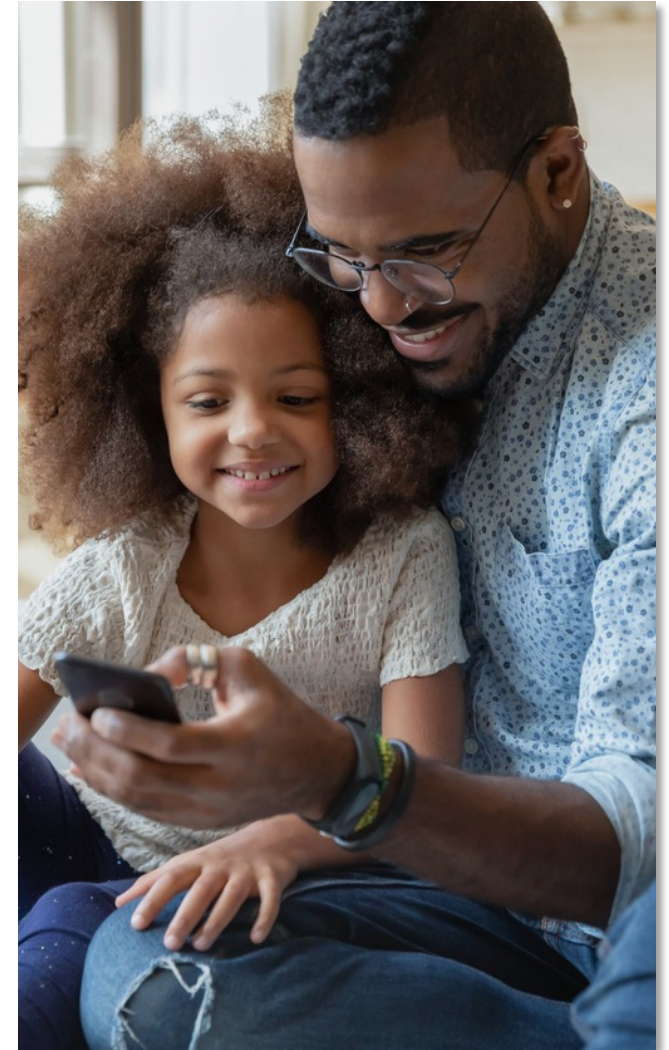
Look out for noise pollution (crying babies, barking dogs) and do a quick sound check to make sure you're not muffled or echoing.

- **Choose your words.**

Think about what you'll say before you press the red button. Use the DCW talking points as a foundation for your comments. Practice once or twice. Then go!

- **Keep it short.**

The average social media scroller will only pause for about 15 seconds (at the most) to listen to your video. Keep your message tight!



READY-MADE SOCIAL MEDIA MESSAGES

It's no longer safe to assume that Direct Care Workers will be available to provide services to the #Michigan families that need them. Something has to change. #More4DCWs

When a Michigan resident experiences a mental illness or developmental disability, they should be able to hire the help they need to ensure their safety and well-being. But right now, they can't. #More4DCWs

In today's tight labor market, it isn't easy to find a Direct Care Worker, whether looking for care for yourself, or a loved one, or hiring an employee for your agency. This leaves our state's most vulnerable residents at risk. #More4DCWs

Let's back the House proposed \$2.50/hour increase for Michigan's 50,000 Direct Care Workers in the behavioral health system in the new budget. It's urgently needed and deserved. #More4DCWs

Let members of the Legislature know you expect them to protect Michigan's most vulnerable residents by ensuring adequate compensation for the state's Direct Care Workers. <https://bit.ly/42t1FSW>

With Michigan lawmakers poised to pass the FY 24 budget, there's no time to lose. Let them know how unfairly our state's Direct Care Workers are being compensated and invite them to act! <https://bit.ly/42t1FSW>

Across Michigan, people with disabilities are endangered by the lack of Direct Care Workers available to help them with their daily needs. State leaders must act to keep these workers on the job! Voice your support at <https://bit.ly/42t1FSW>

In today's labor market, it's unconscionable to leave Direct Care Workers so poorly compensated. Michigan must act to approve an additional \$2.50 per hour, at minimum. <https://bit.ly/42t1FSW>

With Michigan lawmakers poised to pass the FY 24 budget, there's no time to lose. Let them know how unfairly our state's Direct Care Workers are being compensated and invite them to act! <https://bit.ly/42t1FSW>

The state is hosting a series of virtual feedback sessions about direct care support—and we know what's needed: better compensation. Help us share our feedback with lawmakers today! <https://bit.ly/42t1FSW>

Would you do a job that was physically challenging, mentally and emotionally overwhelming, and for which you'd be paid only around \$15 an hour? Why does anyone think direct care workers in Michigan would? #More4DCWs


Today, our entire system of supports for people with mental health challenges and developmental disabilities is anchored in a single assumption: that Direct Care Workers (DCWs) will always be available to help provide services. Unfortunately, that is no longer the case. And Michigan families are already facing a state of emergency. #More4DCWs

MI Direct Care Workers earn on average a starting wage of \$15.20 per hour, according to recent survey findings. This level of compensation is just too low to keep DCWs on the job, leading to a 42 percent turnover rate in the field. We can do better. #More4DCWs

Michigan lawmakers must approve long-term, statewide strategies to support DCWs who provide high-quality, person-centered support. Join us in telling them that action is long overdue. <https://bit.ly/42t1FSW>

Without Direct Care Workers, Michigan's behavioral health system will collapse. In fact, it's already beginning to do so. Tell our state's policy leaders that action is needed NOW. <https://bit.ly/42t1FSW>

[Click HERE for graphics!](#)



POLICYMAKER OUTREACH

TIPS FOR CONTACTING YOUR LAWMAKERS

- **Be clear.**

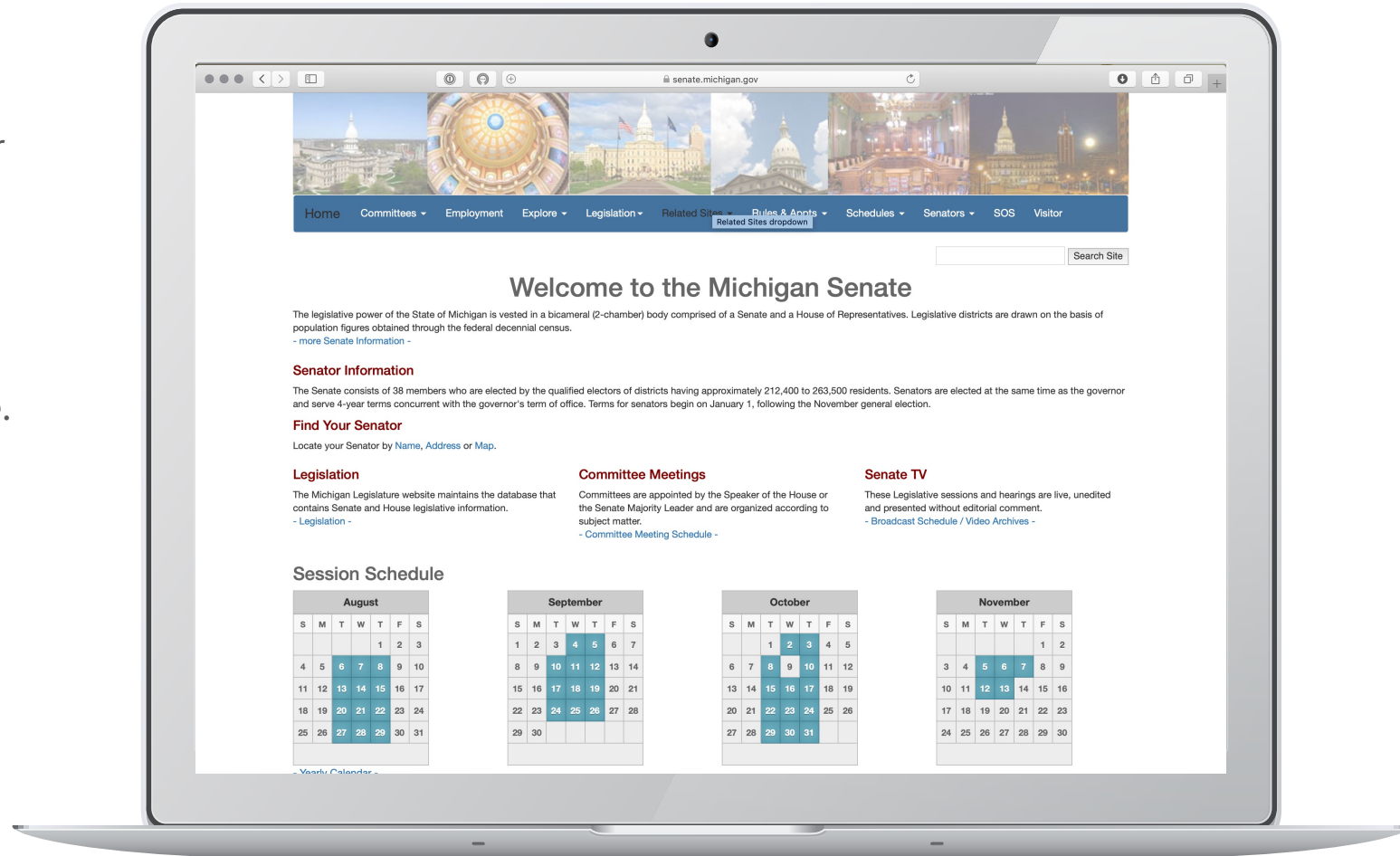
Use your time wisely and plan out your remarks. Busy policymakers appreciate it when you get to the point quickly and ask for clear action. Always be honest and direct without sacrificing courtesy.

- **Communicate multiple ways.**

Sometimes a personal meeting isn't possible. Use email, written correspondence, telephone and in-district coffee hours to reach your lawmaker and share your views.

- **Follow up.**

If you can obtain a personal meeting with a lawmaker, be sure to send a personal thank you note. It'll give you a chance to restate your arguments and show you care.



OTHER GRASSROOTS APPROACHES

- **Attend coffees and/or office hours.**

Many legislators set up local coffee hours where they can meet with members of the public. Make it a point to be present—and bring your student, if possible! These visits are highly impactful.

- **Reach out to policymakers when appropriate.**

If you hear your issue is up for a vote, make a call or shoot an email to the lawmaker's office. They need to hear from you before they push their buttons to vote!



SAMPLE GENERIC LETTER TO POLICYMAKERS

Dear Senator/Representative XX,

With budget season in full swing and so many priorities being discussed, on behalf of advocates and disability services providers, we want to make sure you have all the information on Michigan's Direct Care crisis.

Direct Care Workers (or direct support professionals) provide critical personal care, vocational, practical and emotional support to an estimated 100,000 Michiganders living with mental illness and developmental disabilities.

While DCWs received a \$2.35 per hour wage increase during the pandemic, the average starting wage of a DCW is still only \$15.20 per hour, far less than employees can make in fast food and other establishments. This has resulted in a serious crisis for many Michigan citizens with disabilities and their families as DCWs are hard to find and keep due to severe underpayment.

The compensation is too low to keep DCWs on the job and as a result, employee turnover is 42 percent in this critical field. Without these workers, Michigan's behavioral health framework quickly collapses and is already beginning to do so.

The House budget recommendations are a solid beginning and can help us begin to get the job done. We strongly back the House proposed \$2.50/hour increase for Michigan's 50,000 Direct Care Workers in the behavioral health system in the Fiscal Year 2024 budget, and look forward to continuing to bring our DCWs the compensation they need and deserve.

We hope to work with you to take swift action to truly fix this problem and provide our most vulnerable individuals and their families with the stability and relief they deserve.

Sincerely,

/S/

Find your lawmakers:

- House.Michigan.gov
- www.Senate.Michigan.gov

Email the Governor:

Gretchen.Whitmer@michigan.gov





LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

TIPS FOR WRITING A LETTER TO THE EDITOR

- **Get right to the point!**

LTEs are usually short. Make your strongest arguments early in the letter and take a firm position. The best letters have a short, crisp introduction, make just 1–3 points (supported with data), then offer a concise conclusion.

- **Make each letter your own**

While sample content is sometimes provided (see next), it's never wise to use it as is. Research the issues yourself and use your own distinctive voice to state your opinion.

- **Don't send the same letter to multiple media outlets.**

Publications prefer original content.

- **Be sure to include your contact info.**

The media outlet will likely reach out to be sure you are a real person.



SAMPLE GENERIC LETTER TO THE EDITOR

To Whom it May Concern:

As someone who cares for a person with behavioral health challenges, I am writing to alert your readers—and, indeed, our policymakers—of the need to increase compensation for the Direct Care Workers who provide critical personal care, vocational, practical and emotional support to an estimated 100,000 Michiganders living with mental illness and developmental disabilities.

While DCWs received a \$2.35 per hour wage increase during the pandemic, the average starting wage of a DCW is still only \$15.20 per hour, which is not at all competitive in today's job market. This has resulted in a serious crisis for many Michigan citizens with disabilities and their families as DCWs are hard to find and keep due to severe underpayment.

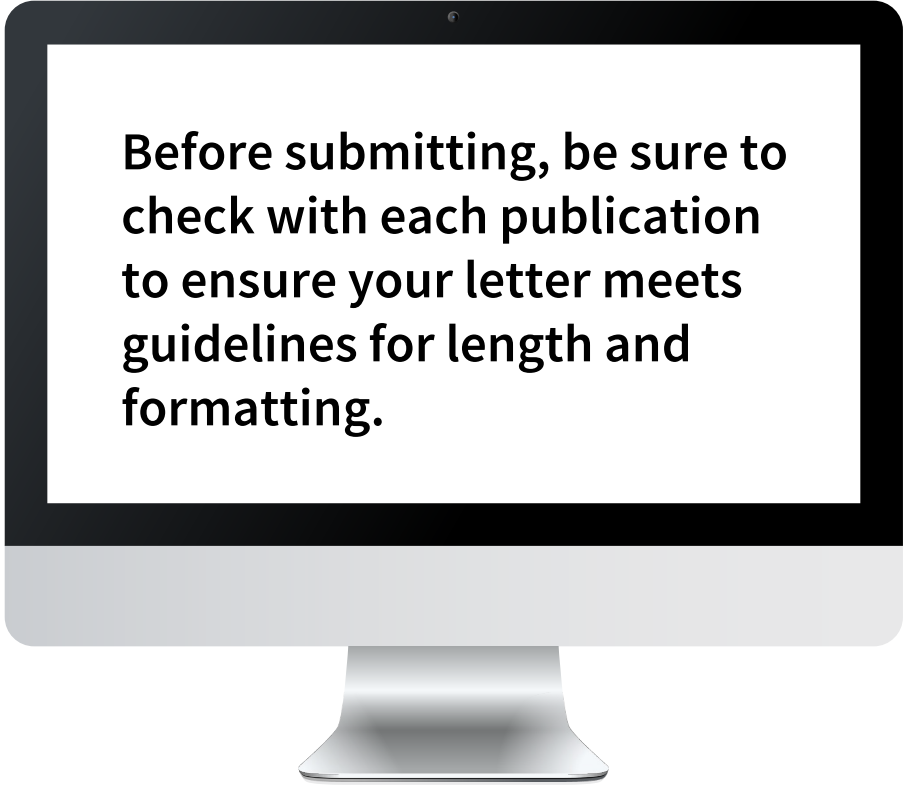
The compensation is too low to keep DCWs on the job and as a result, employee turnover is 42 percent in this critical field. Without these workers, Michigan's behavioral health framework quickly collapses and is already beginning to do so.

The House budget recommendations are a solid beginning and can help us begin to get the job done. We strongly back the House proposed \$2.50/hour increase for Michigan's 50,000 Direct Care Workers in the behavioral health system in the Fiscal Year 2024 budget, and look forward to continuing to bring our DCWs the compensation they need and deserve.

It's long past time Michigan took action to fix this problem and provide our most vulnerable individuals and their families with the stability and relief they deserve.

Sincerely,

/S/



Before submitting, be sure to check with each publication to ensure your letter meets guidelines for length and formatting.

A photograph of a business meeting. In the foreground, two hands are shaking in a firm handshake. The hand on the left is wearing a white ribbed sweater cuff, and the hand on the right has bright pink and yellow nail polish. In the background, a man in a dark suit and white shirt is sitting at a desk with his hands clasped. A laptop is open on the desk to the left. Another hand with pink and yellow nail polish is visible on the right, resting on a document with a blue pie chart. A large blue diagonal overlay covers the top right portion of the image, containing the text.

RECRUITING MORE ISSUE SUPPORTERS



HELP US GROW.

- Tell your friends, family and colleagues you support increased compensation for Michigan DCWs.
- Encourage folks to reach out to their policymakers and partner with each other.
- Share information with your employers, community leaders, and volunteer organizations.

For more information, contact
stephanie@reschstrategies.com