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Contact:  
Stephanie Van Koevering  
[stephanie@reschstrategies.com](mailto:stephanie@reschstrategies.com)  
517-974-6065

## Michigan’s direct care workers respond to lower-than-expected budget allocation for FY 24

**“This increase is a help, but policy leaders need to stop pushing pennies at a problem that requires systemic, wholesale change.”**

With thousands of Michigan families lacking care for their loved ones, and service providers struggling to fill open positions to provide necessary supports for people with disabilities, the state Legislature has authorized a budget increase of just \$0.85 an hour for its direct care workers (DCWs).

The average starting wage for a DCW in Michigan’s behavioral health sector is stagnant at just \$15.20 per hour, which is insufficient for many DCWs to justify remaining on the job. This budget appropriation is too little, advocates say, and leaves the state’s most vulnerable residents at risk.

“When we’ve got a system of care predicated on the availability of DCWs, things begin to crumble quickly when those workers can’t afford to stay on the job,” said Robert Stein, general counsel for the Michigan Assisted Living Association. “Consequently, we’re facing a crisis and today’s budget does nothing to address the issue in a meaningful way. This increase is a help, but policy leaders need to stop pushing pennies at a problem that requires systemic, wholesale change.”

Recent surveys have indicated widespread health and safety concerns for people struggling to find DCWs who can stay with them and provide their needed care.

“We have countless stories of families who are struggling to find help and care for their loved ones,” said Todd Culver, president and CEO of Incompass Michigan. “We know what’s needed, and it’s not the stop-gap solutions we’ve been seeing thus far. Leveraging our state’s fiscal pressures by putting our most vulnerable residents at risk is not sustainable over the long term. We’ve already left sustainability in our rear-view mirrors.”

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