



Michigan can—and must—do better for people with disabilities.

Our state leaders appropriate funding to pay Direct Care Workers. These workers, in turn, provide quality services to an estimated 100,000 Michigan residents with mental illness or developmental disabilities.

Direct Care Worker salaries in Michigan’s mental health system are directly tied to Medicaid funding, which has not kept pace with the needs of our state. Many of these workers do not receive any medical or other benefits.

Despite the critical care Direct Care Workers provide to Michigan’s most vulnerable citizens, the average starting wage for a Direct Care Worker in Michigan is \$11.44 per hour—well below the average starting wage at a retail company or fast-food restaurant.

For more than a year, these workers have been incentivized with temporary wage increases, funded largely by federal COVID relief dollars. However, the constant threat of repeated wage expiration deadlines has worn on these workers, making it tougher than ever to keep them on the job.

Nearly a million Michigan residents rely on the value Direct Care Workers provide. When they’re gone, what will happen to the Michigan families who rely on them for essential support? And, taking another step back, what will happen to the employers who rely on those family members for work? This isn’t just a personal matter—it’s an economic one.

It’s time to make the Direct Care Worker wage increase permanent, once and for all. And that’s only the beginning of what it will take to stabilize and grow the profession.

In addition to providing adequate compensation to Michigan’s Direct Care Workers through the state budget, our state’s policy leaders can benefit from a Direct Care Worker statute that includes:

- Mandatory spending that is annually earmarked and tied to inflation;
- A special fund to support direct worker training programs, ongoing professional development and the annual expense of mandated Direct Care Worker certifications; and
- Career pathways that can help workers grow and advance in the profession.