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Direct Care Worker Compensation Remains Largely Flat Despite Inflationary Pressures Workers Continue to Flee Jobs Statewide, Leaving Vulnerable Michigan Families Unsupported

The average starting wage for a Direct Care Worker (DCW) in Michigan’s behavioral health sector is stagnant at just \$15.20 per hour, according to new data released today by the Michigan Assisted Living Association and Incompass Michigan.

“Although Michigan urgently needs Direct Care Workers to support individuals with behavioral health challenges, these team members are leaving the profession in record numbers due to poor pay and inflationary increases,” said Todd Culver, president and CEO of Incompass Michigan. “More than a quarter of the organizations we surveyed have discontinued programs during the past six months due to the unavailability of staff, and another one-fourth are considering doing so.”

Survey results indicate that more than a third of survey respondents have health and safety concerns for the people they support.

“When a state’s behavioral health system is built entirely on the availability of Direct Care Workers and then we don’t pay them a competitive wage, then we begin to experience a major—even historic—level of system failure,” said Robert Stein, general counsel for the Michigan Assisted Living Association. “These organizations are largely funded through state Medicaid dollars, and that means they can’t just simply increase DCW pay.”

Stein and Culver say legislative action is urgently needed to help shore up a system that’s on its knees.

“The scope of the problem is becoming impossible to ignore,” Culver said. “In the past, lawmakers have been willing to help address DCW compensation challenges, but with inflation as it is, it just hasn’t been enough.”

The full report is available at <https://incompassmi.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/2023-workforce-survey-report-V2.pdf>

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