



For Immediate Release

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Honor Direct-Care Workers with Raises as well as Roses

PHI releases data on personal and home care aide wages in 50 states

Bronx, NY—In honor of the invaluable work that America’s caregivers engage in everyday, Congress has declared September 8-12, 2008, **Direct Support Professional Recognition Week**. Employers are urged to throw parties and offer awards to their staff, who dress, feed, toilet, and support in myriad other ways millions of American elders and people with disabilities. But these workers need more than roses: the backbone of America’s long-term care system, direct-care workers earn such low wages that many cannot escape poverty.

A recent report from PHI, a national nonprofit preparing America to care for growing numbers of elders and people with disabilities, documents that personal and home care aides have seen their real wages (adjusted for inflation) fall since 1999.

The [State Chart Book on Wages for Personal and Home Care Aides, 1999-2006](#) documents wage trends for all 50 states. Report highlights show:

- Across the U.S., real wages dropped by 4 percent during the seven-year period, with 21 states showing either a fall in real wages or no change at all.
- In nearly 60% of states (29), average hourly wages for personal and home care aides were below 200% of the Federal Poverty Line wage for individuals in one-person households working full time.
- In 2006, no state (with the exception of Hawaii which uses a different standard) reported a personal and home care aide wage above 250% of the Federal Poverty Line wage for a single individual (\$11.78), a level that approximates an economically self-sufficient wage in many states for a single individual but likely is insufficient for an adult with dependent children.



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Dr. Dorie Seavey, Director of Research at PHI and author of the report, notes that “personal and home care aides are the second-fastest growing occupation in the country, yet wages have not kept up with inflation. Laws of supply and demand don’t apply when wages are determined by public financing systems.”

“Today a senior citizen may not eat, bathe, or take their medication—all because a home care worker had to take another job in order to make ends meet,” says Seavey. “No one wants to see our elders—or others with disabilities—in this situation. We must act now to make sure these workers have quality jobs that include a living wage.”

Towards this end, PHI recommends that Congress take the following actions:

- **Pass “The Fair Home Health Care Act”** (S2061/HR 3582) to extend federal wage and hour protection to all home care workers.
- **Establish minimum standards for wages and benefits** paid to direct-care workers under public programs in order to improve the competitiveness of direct-care jobs.
- **Encourage states to target payment policies**, ensuring that state and federal funds *directly* improve wages and benefits for direct-care workers.
- **Support the development of market-based demonstrations** that examine the impact of increases in direct-care wages and benefits on retention.
- **Support state demonstrations that extend health care coverage** to direct-care workers who provide publicly funded supports and services.

For more information on rising demand and sinking wages, visit www.PHInational.org, and check out Dr. Seavey’s two latest reports: [Occupational Projections for the Direct Care Workforce, 2006-2016](#) and [State Chart Book on Wages For Personal And Home Care Aides, 1999-2006](#) .

About PHI: PHI works to improve the lives of people who need home or residential care—by improving the lives of the workers who provide that care. For more information, visit www.PHInational.org.



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