

NC Council on Developmental Disabilities Welcomes General Assembly's Investment in Direct Support Professional Workforce

New state budget includes significant compensation increase for professionals serving people with intellectual and developmental disabilities

The North Carolina Council on Developmental Disabilities (NCCDD) applauds the General Assembly's approval of a significant investment to strengthen North Carolina's Direct Support Professional (DSP) workforce. The state budget, signed by Governor Stein today, includes \$21.3 million in recurring funding for higher compensation for the professionals who provide essential services to people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD).

Talley Wells, Executive Director of NCCDD, said the investment reflects years of discussion and collaboration among self-advocates, families, provider organizations, disability advocates and bipartisan legislative leaders.

“This investment represents meaningful progress for thousands of Direct Support Professionals whose work makes it possible for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities to live, work and thrive in their communities,” said Wells. “For years, self-advocates, families, providers and other supporters have worked alongside legislative champions to highlight the workforce crisis facing our state. We are especially grateful to Governor Stein, members of the I/DD Caucus and legislative leaders from both parties who recognized the critical role Direct Support Professionals play every day.”

Direct Support Professionals assist people with I/DD in daily living, employment and community participation, helping them live as independently as possible. Low wages have caused severe staff shortages and limited access to community-based services. This workforce crisis is one of two major challenges for North Carolina's I/DD community. The other major challenge is that almost 21,000 North Carolinians are on a waiting list for Innovations Waiver services.

“While this investment represents meaningful progress, there is still more work ahead,” Wells said. “Thousands of North Carolinians with intellectual and developmental disabilities continue to wait for the services they need, and providers across the state are still working to rebuild the workforce that makes those services possible. Today's investment provides important momentum, and we look forward to continuing our partnership with lawmakers, advocates and families to build on this progress.”

The legislation also includes accountability measures requiring providers to demonstrate that the increased funding is used for employee wages, benefits or other payroll costs. In addition, the budget provides \$70.8 million in recurring funding to increase Medicaid

personal care service rates for beneficiaries receiving services through programs like the Community Alternatives Program for Disabled Adults (CAP/DA), strengthening access to home and community-based care for thousands of North Carolina's residents.

"As someone who benefits from CAP/DA services, I know firsthand how important these supports are," said Jon D'Angelo, NCCDD Board Chair. "Programs like CAP/DA help people with disabilities live independently, participate in their communities and maintain greater control over their daily lives. This investment provides greater security for those services."

The actual impact for the disability community will be almost three times greater than the General Assembly's investment because the federal government provides a nearly 2 to 1 match. This means the recurring funding increase for the Innovations Waiver DSP rates will be \$59.4 million, and the increase to personal care services will be \$197.5 million.

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About the North Carolina Council on Developmental Disabilities

The North Carolina Council on Developmental Disabilities (NCCDD) works to improve the lives of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) and their families through advocacy, systems change and community partnerships. Established under the federal Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act, the Council brings together self-advocates, family members, policymakers and community leaders to strengthen services, expand opportunities and promote policies that help people with I/DD live, work and fully participate in their communities. Learn more at nccdd.org.