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Action is critical in 2017 to address the serious disability services workforce shortage to stabilize services, local businesses, and communities statewide.

The Situation

Minnesota's effective Home & Community- Based Services (HCBS) allow people with intellectual and physical disabilities to receive services tailored to meet their needs – whether that means help getting to work or complex 24/7 medical care.

Right now the foundation of the system - a strong and stable direct care workforce - is crumbling away. Without maintenance the entire system is at risk.



- Direct care workers who assist people with disabilities have demanding, highly-skilled, professional jobs and should receive competitive wages. \$12.32/hour is the average wage of HCBS direct care workers in Minnesota, and many earn lessⁱ. **This pay is directly tied to state reimbursement rates** set by lawmakers and that pay has not kept up with rising costs over the past decade.
- **Due to these low wages, more than 8,700 unfilled HCBS caregiver and staff jobs exist in Minnesota todayⁱⁱ.** People with disabilities and providers cannot hire the staff they need. There is a huge strain on overworked direct care staff, and providers struggling to recruit, train, retain and operate with high turnover rates. **HCBS providers are some of the largest employers in Greater Minnesota** – investing in wage increases means providing sustainable, quality jobs for communities that need them.
- **A majority of legislators in both parties co-authored our bill to raise direct care worker wages in 2016**, but failed to pass an increase. Now the state's more than \$1 billion budget surplus offers a chance to invest without needing to shift funds or raise revenue.
- **Failure to maintain Minnesota's community-based disability services will lead to more costly scenarios**, including an increase in emergency room visits and hospitalizations, mental health crises, and dangerous health consequences.

The Solution: Take Action in 2017

Many reforms have set HCBS providers on a more sustainable workforce path, but they do not take full effect until 2019. We must take steps now to stabilize the workforce and meet our commitment to people with disabilities.

What's in the Best Life Alliance bill? *SF 669/ HF 873*

- Consecutive 4 percent wage increases for more than 80,000 direct care workers statewide (effective July 1, 2017 and July 1, 2018).
- Development of a long-term solution for funding health insurance for direct care workers by July 1, 2019.

About Best Life Alliance

Best Life Alliance is a statewide coalition of more than 130 organizations, people with disabilities, families and supporters advocating for Home & Community-Based Services. These essential services include training and employment programs, crisis respite services, group homes, complex home health care, Personal Care Assistance (PCA), and other services that allow people with disabilities to stay healthy, active, and independent. Best Life Alliance was formerly known as The 5% Campaign.

About Home & Community-Based Services

More than 1,500 provider organizations deliver these essential and customized services to 73,000 people with disabilities in virtually every Minnesota neighborhood. They include complex home healthcare, employment programs, group homes, crisis respite services, day programs, Personal Care Assistance, and others. Community-based services increase independence, promote health and safety, foster skill development, provide job coaching, meet medical needs, allow people to work and volunteer, and more.

Questions?

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ⁱ Calculated using ARRM's 2016 Member Workforce Survey Data.

ⁱⁱ Calculated by CliftonLarsonAllen using DHS data and ARRM member reported vacancy rates as of September 2015.