



AN ACT RELATIVE TO MEETING HUMAN SERVICE DEMAND BY MODERNIZING INCENTIVES FOR THE DIRECT CARE WORKFORCE

H.2104 / S.1325, filed by Rep. Garballey, Rep. Cataldo and Sen. Feeney

This bill requires that Chapter 257 rates that fund direct care staff and direct support professionals' salaries be consistent with the Bureau of Labor Statistics 75th percentile. This would, over time, increase wages for those providing these critical services.

CONTEXT

The human service field is in the midst of a significant workforce crisis. Staff are often underpaid, leading to recruitment and retention challenges. This means that thousands of individuals with IDD and autism remain on waitlists for services.

THE BILL

- Requires that when establishing rates of pay through Chapter 257, the state must ensure that salaries for direct care staff and direct support professionals be consistent with the Bureau of Labor Statistics 75th percentile, at a minimum.
 - The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), part of the U.S. Department of Labor, is a nonpartisan statistical agency. The data that they collect and analyze helps to inform decisions about wages and the labor market.
- The employer's portion of fringe benefits and payroll taxes will also be benchmarked to changes in the same costs in comparable sectors.

THE IMPACT

While Chapter 257 laid a strong foundation for the human services sector, additional efforts are required to meet the evolving needs of providers and the communities they serve. Prioritizing workforce sustainability by raising the wage rates for direct care workers to a competitive level will help address the workforce crisis cycle.

Two key elements of this crisis are funding and program capacity. When insufficient funding results in low wages, programs are not able to retain enough staff to run at full capacity. Programs not being at full capacity means budgeted funds will not be completely used, messaging to the state that fewer funds are needed. We are currently entrenched in this cycle which results in growing wait lists of unserved or underserved individuals. Raising wages will pave the way for workers to see a career with a future in direct care work. This is a key step to ensuring the long-term success of this critical law.

For More information, contact Nora Bent, Director of Government Affairs & Strategic Partnerships: nbent@arcmass.org

THEARCOFMASS.ORG

