



Impact of The Better Care Better Jobs Act in Massachusetts

If passed, the Better Care Better Jobs Act would:

- Provide HCBS to over 17,842 additional people in Massachusetts,
- Create 2,878 new direct care jobs in Massachusetts, and
- Make it possible for 5,947 Massachusetts family caregivers to return to work or secure new jobsⁱ

The Problem: Families all over the country are facing difficult decisions about supporting family members as they age and/or have a disability. In Massachusetts, over 102,953 people with disabilities and/or aging adults receive Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) through Medicaid. These numbers have been further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, so the limits of our current service system have long been surpassed. Nationally, the waiting lists for these services are upward of 850,000 elderly and/or disabled Americans waiting years for these essential services.ⁱⁱ Nationally, home care workers make an average hourly wage of \$12.12 with the average annual earnings of only \$17,200. Nearly 1 in 5 home care workers live in poverty.ⁱⁱⁱ From 2018-2028, the United States will need to fill 4.4 million home care job openings.^{iv} Without more funding and support, the direct care jobs will be left unfilled and capacity in the system will continue to fail to meet the growing level of need. Left unaddressed, more and more Massachusetts families will have nowhere to turn to for help.

The Solution: The Better Care Better Jobs Act would help make the desperately needed investments in the crumbling service system that supports people with disabilities and/or aging adults. The funding would begin to provide the resources to expand these services, to create the infrastructure needed to support those currently without the services that they need and provide funding for states to address the home care workforce crisis. Additionally, the Better Care Better Jobs Act will improve the quality of the direct care workforce by increasing the wages for home care workers.

The Financial Case: The investment of funds included in the Better Care Better Jobs Act will be significant and is needed after decades of lack of funding. It will provide funds for states to build the infrastructure and capacity that they need to move people with disabilities and aging adults off of the waiting lists, hire the workforce needed, improve conditions for the workforce and streamline the system. Developing long term infrastructure and sustainably creating thousands of "living wage" care jobs would greatly contribute to Massachusetts's economy in the coming years as it recovers from COVID-19.

Polling: 88% of Democrats, 66% of Republicans, and 77% of all voters support the Better Care Better Jobs Act.^v

Nationally: If passed, the Better Care Better Jobs Act would:

- Provide HCBS to 3,199,481 additional people,
- Create 516,045 new caregiving jobs, and
- Make it possible for 1,066,494 family members to return to work or secure new jobs



Background:

LTSS: People with disabilities and aging adults often require some assistance to live independently in their homes and communities. Broadly these services are called long-term services and supports or LTSS. They include a broad range of health-related and social services including assistance with activities of daily living such as bathing, dressing, eating, meal preparation, medication management, and communication support. The main program that pays for these LTSS for people with disabilities and aging adults is Medicaid.

Medicaid: Medicaid is a state and federal partnership, governed by a Federal law, in which the costs are shared between the federal government and the states. Because it is a state-run program, Medicaid requirements vary by state, including the amount and type of income and assets eligibility requirements. Services are also based on “medical necessity,” so not all Medicaid-eligible individuals receive LTSS. There’s a real need for a consistency of services, across state lines, to ensure an equitable distribution in the quality of services provided by each state. Not only does the type and quality of services vary from state to state, but the access to these services greatly varies due to Waiting Lists that may be more prevailing in some states.

Waiting Lists: Because of what is referred to as the *Institutional Bias* of the Medicaid program, states can have waiting lists for some services, the services that more people with disabilities and aging adults want, Medicaid funded Home and Community-Based Services- HCBS. Those HCBS are optional services under the Federal Medicaid law, while Nursing home services are mandatory, with no enrollment limits. But states can cap enrollment for HCBS creating long waiting lists for participation in Medicaid-funded HCBS, in some states, those waits can be years or even a decade.

Caregiving/ Workforce: Many people with disabilities and aging adults rely on support that is provided by informal caregivers, such as friends or family members. Caregiving can result in difficult financial, physical, and emotional obstacles because informal caregivers usually have little to no training and have little access to information or support, in navigating the complicated Medicaid system, whereas paid professionals would be better equipped at navigating and distributing these critical services. Additionally, informal caregivers may not be considered for certain job opportunities, because of the time commitment required from providing care and services, and this only adds to the financial insecurity and emotional toll of these circumstances. In order to support people with disabilities and aging adults there is an extreme need to improve the supply, retention, pay and career trajectory for the workforce that supports people with disabilities and aging adults. This workforce, that plays the critical role of supporting people with disabilities and aging adults, is made up of mostly women—and women of color in particular, and the Better Care Better Jobs Act would ensure that the vital importance of this workforce is recognized.

ⁱ Richard Frank and Jonathan Gruber, “Impacts of Better Care Better Jobs Act on Home Care and Jobs” <https://gruberj.medium.com/impacts-of-better-care-better-jobs-act-on-home-care-and-jobs-d0ff8d1e4154>

ⁱⁱ Eiken. 2017. Medicaid Long-Term Services and Supports Beneficiaries in 2013 (Table 1). Truven Health Analytics. <https://www.medicaid.gov/sites/default/files/2019-12/ltss-beneficiaries-2013.pdf>.

ⁱⁱⁱ PHI. “Workforce Data Center.” Last modified September 14, 2020. <https://phinational.org/policy-research/workforce-data-center/>.

^{iv} 5 Home care job openings include new jobs created and jobs that need to be filled due to workers leaving the field or the labor force. PHI, 2020. <https://phinational.org/policy-research/workforce-data-center/#tab=State+Data&nav=Employment+Projections&states=42>

^v Data for Progress, August 5th, 3021 [Sen. Casey and Rep. Dingell: Pass The Better Care Better Jobs Act \(dataforprogress.org\)](https://www.dataforprogress.org/legislation/sen-casey-and-rep-dingell-pass-the-better-care-better-jobs-act)