



DC MUST INVEST IN THE CARE ECONOMY!

ALL CARE WORKERS DESERVE A LIVEABLE WAGE

Mayor Bowser's Proposed FY 25 Fair Shot Budget fails to support needed investment in the Direct Care Workforce, the highest demand, highest need jobs among all jobs in the District's health economy. Direct Care Workers are Certified Nursing Assistants, Home Health and personal care aides and Direct Support Professionals who care for older adults and children and adults with chronic and disabling conditions.

DC needs thousands of new direct care workers to meet the growing demand of an aging population. Yet, DC has been losing direct care workers in droves. In 2023 alone, the eldercare workforce shrunk by 4,489 workers. This represents an overall reduction of 30 percent in just one year. We also are not training enough workers to replace those who have left. This means that the gap between the need and demand continues to grow.

Workers are leaving the direct care workforce because wages are not competitive with jobs that have similar or lower entry level requirements. In AARP's nationwide ranking on [wage competitiveness](#) for direct care workers, DC ranked dead last. According to AARP, the gap between the median hourly wage of direct care workers in DC and other occupations with comparable or lesser entry requirements was more than \$5.00/hour.

Lack of investment in wages and training helps perpetuate a cycle of disinvestment that has deprived this largely black, brown, and female workforce of financial stability and economic mobility.

With so many workers leaving the direct care workforce, providers are paying more to attract and retain labor while reducing services including closing admissions, closing beds and declining to serve clients with high care needs. See [January 2024 Workforce Survey](#).

The impact on seniors, adults and children with disabilities and their families is devastating. Seniors and people with disabilities of all ages are going without care.

The Mayor's proposed budget fails to include any money to address the wage gap for these workers or to reduce training costs or improve opportunities for these workers to advance their careers.

In eliminating funding for the Pay Equity Act that has been essential to raising the wages of Childcare Workers, Mayor Bowser noted the District's lack of investment in the Direct Care Workforce. We must be clear that reducing the wages of Childcare Workers because we have failed to invest in the Direct Care Workforce is simply the wrong approach. It is time to rectify historic disinvestment in our care workforce and ensure that all care workers can earn a livable wage!

Cuts of Concern:

In the DACL Budget –The proposed FY 25 funding levels for In-home services **represents a 25% reduction** from FY 23 actual expenditures at a time when demand for services is increasing.

Workforce Investment - The proposed FY 25 budget of \$103,248,620 **is 50% less than the FY 24 proposed budget** of \$206,455,337. The cut represents \$73,572,698 in one-time funding and \$29,634,019 in recurring funding. **There appear to be no investments in training for direct care workers.**

UDC Workforce Development and Lifelong Learning – UDC's budget is cut \$4,622,234 to reflect efficiencies in agency operations and **to right size the Workforce Development and Lifelong Learning to reflect projected lower enrollment -- a consequence of failing to increase wages for these high demand jobs!**

In addition to these cuts, Mayor Bowser's budget proposes to increase revenue through a regressive sales tax, and to cut various safety net programs such as the EITC, childcare subsidies, ERAP and others that help stabilize low income, working families. We know that many direct care workers must rely on these and other safety net programs such as Medicaid and SNAP because their wages are insufficient to pay for basic needs.