



Providers offering supports to people with disabilities

1101 King Street, Suite 380, Alexandria, Virginia 22314-2944 • Phone: 703.535.7850 • Fax: 703.535.7860 • Email: ancor@ancor.org • Web site <http://www.ancor.org>

Contact: Dr. Renee Pietrangelo
703-535-7850
rpierangelo@ancor.org

U.S. HOUSE OVERWHELMINGLY BACKS DIRECT SUPPORT PROFESSIONAL WORKFORCE RESOLUTION

310,000 Direct Support Workers Given their Due

November 6, Alexandria, VA -- By a recorded vote of 382 to 0, the U.S. House of Representatives passed The Direct Support Professional Recognition Resolution (H. Con. Res. 94) on November 04. In so doing, the U.S. Congress opened the door for further action to secure a strong, stable, quality workforce of support services for all Americans with disabilities and mental retardation. Rep. Buck McKeon (R-CA), chairman of the House Subcommittee on 21st Century Competitiveness, introduced the resolution. The Senate passed a similar resolution on October 21. "This is a gigantic step forward!" said Renee L. Pietrangelo, PhD, CEO of the American Network of Community Options and Resources (ANCOR). "Finally, the dedication of over 310,000 direct support professionals (DSP) is on record in both the House and the Senate as being a vital service for *all* Americans who depend on outside support."

At issue is the ability of providers of community supports and services to hire and retain a quality workforce. Both the dollar amount and percentage increase in hourly wage rates for private direct support workers are far below that of comparable job categories as well as the national minimum wage. The result is a turnover rate ranging from 50 to 75 percent and a severe workforce shortage. Compensation for direct support workers is tied to Medicaid. State funded systems, including those that rely on Medicaid, are held to fixed appropriations based upon state public policy choices and economic conditions and are not as responsive as the private sector in adjusting to labor supply and demand factors.

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House Backs Workforce Needs

Page 2 of 2

“Health care, long term services and supports, including community-based services provided by Medicaid are among the most important ways that United States demonstrates that it values all of its citizens,” noted Pietrangelo. “Medicaid services help to keep people healthy and enable individuals with disabilities to lead personally enriching lives by contributing to the communities around them. In addition to physician, hospital and clinic services, Medicaid provides a vital—and sometimes the only--- funding source for critical services such as those provided by DSPs.”

DSPs make it possible for citizens with disabilities to work and live in their communities and enjoy some of the opportunities and freedoms the rest of us take for granted. Frail elders and the nearly 8 million Americans with mental retardation and developmental disabilities (many of whom rely on private supports and services) stand to benefit by this Resolution. At risk are the services provided for Americans with disabilities that include mental retardation, autism, cerebral palsy, Down syndrome, epilepsy, and other long-term care related conditions.

ANCOR is dedicated to raising federal and public awareness about the workforce crisis threatening community-based supports and services. Its National Advocacy Campaign is working to effect public policy that would make direct support compensation more competitive with other industries, thus enabling providers of support services to build a quality, stable workforce. A campaign video and public service announcements that summarize the essence of this workforce crisis can be viewed at www.supportnac.org.

The American Network of Community Options and Resources represents and advocates on behalf of the more than 800 providers of services and supports for 365,000 Americans with disabilities. To view the study “The Growing Crisis in Recruiting and Retaining the Direct Support Workforce,” visit http://www.ancor.org/dev/Activities/NAC/Final-Report_Revised121602.pdf. To view the Senate resolution visit <http://www.ancor.org/dev/activities/nac/sconres21.htm>. To view the House resolution visit <http://www.ancor.org/dev/activities/nac/hconres94.htm>. To get more information on the ANCOR National Advocacy Campaign, visit www.supportnac.org.