



*Providers offering supports to people with disabilities*

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## **SENATE WORKFORCE RESOLUTION PASSES ANCOR Praises Feat on Behalf of Workers**

October 22, 2003, Alexandria, VA -- The U.S. Senate today signaled important changes for Americans with developmental disabilities and mental retardation. “The passage of the National Direct Support Recognition Act is a milestone in our struggle to secure a quality, stable direct support workforce,” said Renee L. Pietrangelo, PhD, CEO of the American Network of Community Options and Resources. The passage of Concurrent Resolution 21, introduced by Senator Jim Bunning (R-KY) and co-sponsored by Senator Blanche Lambert Lincoln (D-AR), makes it a national priority to promote a workforce that will advance the daily lives of Americans dependent on support services.

The resolution acknowledges the contributions of direct support professionals, the backbone of the service industry that provides for America’s most vulnerable citizens. It recognizes as vital the dedication of these workers, who *all* Americans depend on to support our citizens with disabilities (young or old). They make it possible for these individuals to realize productive, meaningful and personally satisfying lives in their own communities. A similar resolution, Concurrent Resolution 94, introduced by Congressman Pete Sessions (R-TX) and co-sponsored by Congresswoman Lois Capps (D-CA), is pending in the U.S. House of Representatives.

“Senators Bunning and Lincoln have our deepest gratitude,” said Pietrangelo. “Without their leadership this important resolution would not have found the support it did in the Senate. Afflicted elders and the nearly eight million Americans with mental retardation and developmental disabilities supported by community-based services are incrementally steps closer to receiving the continuous support they desperately need and deserve.”

Private providers of support services have witnessed direct support worker turnover rates as high as 75 percent. They are struggling to find direct support workers to fill vacant positions. This has resulted in a very real crisis for individuals and their families who rely on support workers.

The consulting firm BDO Seidman, LLC, conducted a comprehensive study of wages for a number of service positions. In a report called “The Growing Crisis in Recruiting and Retaining the Direct Support Workforce” BDO Seidman stated, “Over the past decade, both the dollar amount and percentage increase in hourly wage rates for Direct Support Workers are far below that of comparable job categories as well as the national minimum wage. The lack of adequate funding has put providers to the developmentally disabled at a distinct competitive disadvantage with other industries and professions competing in the same workforce. Primary funding for wages comes from state and federal Medicaid programs.”

The resolution comes at a time when ANCOR’s National Advocacy Campaign to raise federal and public awareness about the workforce crisis threatening community-based supports and services is gaining momentum. A campaign video and public service announcements that summarize the essence of this workforce crisis can be viewed at [www.supportnac.org](http://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.supportnac.org/research/bdorpt121602.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](http://www.supportnac.org).

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