

NY State Health Committee Budget Hearing
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I am part of the sandwich generation, simultaneously balancing care for my child and family while caring for my aging Mom, a task that I imagine will become more complicated as she gets older. I watched my Grandmother become a caregiver to my Great Grandmother while in her 70s because we could not afford the full-time home care that my Great-Grandma needed. Sadly, my Grandmother was so exhausted from caring for my Great Grandmother for nearly 10 years that my Great Grandmother's death brought a sense of relief, both financially and personally.

New York's Aging Population:

We are facing an unprecedented elder boom in our state and country— our population is aging rapidly and people are living longer. New York State will grow 1.3% by 2040, but the population of people over 80 will grow by 42.2%.

Most of us will need long-term care at some point in our lives. Most people want to age at home. New York's care infrastructure is woefully inadequate, and our policies and programs have yet to catch up with our state's changing realities, and as a result, many of our families are struggling. Affording long-term care is hard, and the Governor's 2020 cuts to Medicaid are making it even worse.

Shortage of Home Care Workers:

According to [PHI](#), between 2018 and 2028, there will be over 800,000 job openings for home health and personal care aides in New York. Home care workers have great influence over the quality of life of our loved ones, yet the annual salary for home care workers in New York is \$18,600^[2]. In addition to wages, problems with transportation, especially in rural parts of the state, uneven and erratic scheduling, and lack of benefits contribute to the challenge of recruiting and retaining workers.

A 2018–2019 statewide survey of home care agencies found that, on average, 17 percent of home care positions were left unfilled due to staff shortages.

Among the many tragic consequences of the pandemic, the COVID-related deaths in nursing homes has been one of the most shocking, not only because of the proportion of deaths occurring in nursing homes in NY State, but because these deaths could have been prevented if people had been in their homes rather than in institutions. The COVID-19 pandemic has increased demand for home care even more, while further depressing the labor supply.

In a Fall 2020 survey, 85 percent of participating New York State home care agencies reported worsening staff shortages. As a result of these staff shortages, many individuals with unmet home care needs experience hospitalizations that might otherwise be unnecessary, and many enter nursing homes, a costly alternative to in-home care that became especially dangerous during the COVID-19 pandemic.

If we don't improve the quality of home care jobs, the workforce shortage will worsen, causing consumers to resort to institutional care — which is often not the preferred setting and is more expensive.

Budget Ask: Invest in the Home Care Workforce

1. Raise Wages

The system is broken - this is the time for bold solutions, not band aids. To ensure that consumers are able to get the services they need and are authorized for, reduce staff turnover, and provide workers with pay that is aligned with their critical duties, New York must overhaul our attitude and approach to paying for homecare.

New York must increase home care and CDPA wages to 150% of the minimum wage and restore funding cuts to prevent mass institutionalization, particularly in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.

According to the CUNY Home Care Report, Higher wages would attract more workers to the home care field and would spur some home care aides who currently work part-time to seek additional hours.

2. Create the home care jobs Innovation Fund

As New York's home care providers struggle to recruit and retain workers, they unfortunately lack the resources to test innovative solutions to this problem. This year's budget should include funding to support pilot projects throughout the state that boost the number of home care workers that enter and remain in the field.

We recommend that the [Home Care Jobs Innovation Fund](#) is funded at \$15 million over three years. We have confirmed that Senator May and Assemblymember Didi Barrett will be lead sponsors on the Innovation Fund. We introduced this budget item last session and it did make it into the Senate version of the budget - we hope to bring it across the finish line this year.