

Recognizing the Crucial Role of Direct Care Workers in Home Health Care: The Impact of the Direct Support Professionals Act

March 29, 2024

Direct support professionals (DSPs) are the backbone of home care, providing essential assistance to the clients and patients served by home care, home health, and hospice providers around the country. Senators Maggie Hassan (D-NH) and Susan Collins (R-ME) introduced the [Direct Support Professionals Act](#) to address the critical shortage of these workers and improve the quality of care provided. The National Association for Home Care & Hospice (NAHC) applauds Senators Hassan and Collins for their leadership in introducing this crucial legislation, which passed in the Senate on Wednesday, March 20, 2024.

The Problem

DSPs perform a wide range of tasks, such as assisting with daily living activities, including bathing and dressing, monitoring individuals' conditions by checking vital signs, accompanying clients to appointments, and meal preparation. Despite the vital role they play, as we are all acutely aware, there is a severe shortage of these workers nationwide. This shortage has significant implications for the clients and patients we serve, as it impedes their ability to live independently and participate fully in their communities.

The Solution

The *Direct Support Professionals Act* aims to increase awareness of DSPs to help policy makers address the shortage by directing the Office of Management and Budget to revise the Standard Occupational Classification system to establish a separate code for DSPs. This simple change could effect far-reaching benefits:

- 1. Improved Data Collection:** By accurately tracking DSP workforce trends, policymakers will have access to more reliable data to identify workforce shortage areas and assess turnover rates accurately. This information is crucial for developing targeted solutions to address workforce shortages effectively.
- 2. Targeted Workforce Training Programs:** With better data on DSP workforce needs, states and the federal government can implement targeted training programs to equip DSPs with the skills necessary to meet local workforce demands. This will ensure that individuals in need have access to high-quality care from well-trained professionals.
- 3. Recognition of the Unique Role of DSPs:** By establishing a separate classification for DSPs, the Direct Support Professionals Act acknowledges the

critical role these workers play in supporting the individuals our industry serves. This recognition raises awareness of the importance of investing in the DSP workforce and addressing workforce shortages in the home care sector.

The *Direct Support Professionals Act* represents a significant step forward in addressing the critical shortage of DSPs in home care. By improving data collection and recognition of the unique role of DSPs, this legislation will ensure that individuals receive the high-quality care they deserve, enabling them to live independently at home, the place they most want to be.

NAHC urges the House of Representatives to pass the companion bill, [H.R. 2941](#), sponsored by Congressman Fitzpatrick (R-PA), which has bipartisan support and will further strengthen the impact of this important legislation.