



Southwestern Pennsylvania
Partnership for Aging

1323 Freedom Road,
Cranberry Township, PA 16066
724-779-3200
www.swppa.org
info@swppa.org

April 17, 2020

Dear Honorable [],

The current COVID-19 crisis facing the world has highlighted a number of underlying challenges for our health care system and many groups of people working within it. Among medical professionals and essential workers, direct care workers in care facilities and home care are particularly at risk right now. They are on the front line, providing critical care to older adults and persons with disabilities. This care is critically necessary to continue social distancing and assure the well-being of some of the most vulnerable people in the United States.

SWPPA believes that direct care workers, along with all health care workers, deserve hazard pay for their current efforts. We support the pending proposals in the U.S. Congress to provide this pay and all Pennsylvania efforts to support them.

Before the coronavirus pandemic began, the United States was facing a shortage of direct care workers, in part, because their pay for doing this important and demanding work results in income below the federal poverty guideline for a family of four. According to PHI National, in 2019, home care workers earned an average of \$11.52 an hour or \$16,200 annually. Those working in nursing homes fared slightly better, earning \$13.38 an hour or \$22,200 annually. This crisis has exacerbated those challenges and created additional stresses for their families in terms of their safety, challenges in traveling to work, and access to personal protective equipment. They also may have children at home who need care as schools are out, and they may have partners and spouses who are out of work. The shortage has worsened as some workers have been exposed, have had to self-quarantine, or have become sick just as they are needed most.

Home and community-based services, hospice, home health, skilled nursing facilities, palliative care, and disability services touch the lives of many Americans directly and indirectly. People working in such settings also need access to personal protective equipment, related supplies and testing to deliver health care services and long-term services and supports that are essential to protect patients, health care workers and communities, as well as to ensure continuity of functions critical to public health and safety as well as economic security.


We also support making policy changes that will result in direct care work becoming a better respected part of the medical care team. This includes a cost, reimbursement, and pay structure that enables the care systems to increase direct care workers' wages and improve their

employment conditions. This will be necessary to meet the needs of our aging society as well as to be prepared should there be another wave of this pandemic or another virus moving forward.

SWPPA urges you to move legislation forward that provides additional pay (hazard pay), assures paid sick leave, provides access to testing, and covers the costs for PPE for all direct care workers and personal attendants as they are providing critical services through the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, we urge a change in cost, reimbursement, and pay structures for care systems to increase wages and benefits for direct care workers overall.

You may contact us at any time at 724-779-3200 or info@swppa.org.

Best Regards,

Handwritten signatures of Elizabeth A. Mulvaney and Kim Pirilla-Scalise in blue ink.

Elizabeth Mulvaney & Kim Pirilla-Scalise
Co-Chairs, SWPPA Policy Committee

Handwritten signature of Linda Doman in blue ink.

Linda Doman
President, SWPPA

The [Southwestern Pennsylvania Partnership for Aging \(SWPPA\)](#) is a 30-year-old, 300-member volunteer-led association with a mission to serve as a catalyst to promote policy, program and systems change that improves the quality of life of older adults. We seek to provide a neutral forum for collaboration, information sharing, discussion and formulation of aging policy recommendations. SWPPA represents more than one million older adults who live across 10 counties in the Southwestern part of the state. Our members include organizations and businesses, as well as individual members such as civic leaders, business owners, medical professionals, scholars, professionals in aging services, students and residents of all ages.