

PENNSYLVANIA  
DEPARTMENT OF AGING

# LONG-TERM CARE COUNCIL

EST. 2015

September 16, 2019

Dear Council on Reform Members:

As part of your stakeholder engagement process, I am writing on behalf of the Pennsylvania Long-Term Care Council (LTCC) to urge your support of the LTCC's *Blueprint for Strengthening Pennsylvania's Direct Care Workforce*, a copy of which is enclosed with this letter. The blueprint and its recommendations speak directly to the purpose and scope of the Council on Reform – putting forth recommendations to improve the support and protection of vulnerable populations – and your guiding value of “workforce empowerment.”

The blueprint is the culmination of more than a year and a half of work by the LTCC and its committees to examine and propose recommendations to address the commonwealth's escalating direct care workforce crisis. This is a crisis that impacts both access to and the quality of long-term services and supports (LTSS) for seniors and adults with disabilities due to the high turnover and shortage of these workers. Given Pennsylvania's changing demographics and the increasing complexity of those needing services and supports, comprehensive reform is needed so that the needs of our residents can be met both now and in the future.

Direct care workers support and care for some of our most vulnerable Pennsylvanians, yet they often lack the pay needed to provide for their most basic needs and those of their families. The wages these workers typically receive do not align with the physical and emotional demands of this work or the importance of these positions in delivering quality services and supports. As such, one of the LTCC's blueprint recommendations is establishing a minimum starting wage of \$15 an hour for direct care workers, via annual tiered increases, and then adjusted for inflation annually thereafter. Considering that providers throughout the LTSS continuum find themselves constrained by low Medicaid reimbursement rates and other state-supported payments, this recommendation also includes a strategy for increasing providers rates and payments in parallel with the minimum wage increases for DCWs. To help expedite this recommendation and accompanying strategy, the LTCC recommends that the Council on Reform request that the relevant state entities develop cost models to help inform policymakers.

As noted in the blueprint, strengthening the direct care workforce requires a comprehensive approach and appropriate funding. To help move this conversation forward and achieve the needed reform without further delay, the LTCC respectfully requests that the Council on Reform endorse the blueprint and its recommendations.

Sincerely,



Charles W. Quinnan  
Executive Director  
Pennsylvania Long-Term Care Council

Cc: Drew Wilburne, Council on Reform Executive Director

Enclosure