



**CONSORTIUM FOR CITIZENS
WITH DISABILITIES**

Oct. 3rd, 2019

Senator Kamala Harris
112 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Representative Pramila Jayapal
112 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Harris and Representative Jayapal:

The undersigned members of the Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities (CCD) Long Term Services and Supports (LTSS) Task Force strongly support the principles that inform the Domestic Workers Bill of Rights Act of 2019. The Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities (CCD) is the largest coalition of national organizations working together to advocate for federal public policy that ensures the self-determination, independence, empowerment, integration and inclusion of children and adults with disabilities in all aspects of society. The Long Term Services and Supports Task Force focuses on ensuring that people with disabilities and aging adults have access to the LTSS, particularly Home and Community Based Services (HCBS), they need to live, work and participate in their communities.

Domestic workers are indispensable to ensuring the rights of individuals with disabilities to full participation in their communities. Direct Support Professionals (DSPs), home health aides, and personal care attendants are the backbone of the HCBS system, directly providing the services and supports people with disabilities need to be fully integrated and engaged in their communities. Ensuring that these workers are afforded the respect, dignity, and recognition that they deserve is of primary importance to the disability community.

This sub-set of the domestic workforce is in high demand: expected to be one of the fastest-growing occupations in the US during the next decade, home health aides and personal care assistants alone will account for about 1.2 million new jobs between 2016 and 2026, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) (the BLS does not currently track DSPs as an employment category). However, because domestic workers have for the most part been excluded from labor laws that provide protections to most employees, those providing direct support to people with disabilities are among the lowest paid in the country, with a median annual wage of about \$24,000 in 2018—barely above the federal poverty level of \$20,420 for a family of three. The vast majority

of these workers do not have paid time off or other benefits.

Ensuring that these workers have access to livable wages, and the kinds of working conditions that will lead to workforce sustainability, is a crucial concern for people with disabilities. Without a living wage and basic worker protections, domestic workers for people with disabilities are often unable to remain in the job, or are not able to provide the quality of support they could if they were compensated fairly. This in turn leads to a crisis of quality in home and community based services, which directly harms the independence, community integration, and civil rights of people with disabilities. It also puts a significant strain on state disability service systems, and contributes to the severe shortage of available services. According to the National Core Indicators (NCI) Staff Stability Survey, the average annual turnover rate among DSPs is 43.8%, with several states reporting a turnover rate higher than 60%. The expense to service systems—cost to replace staff is estimated at greater than \$4,000—is secondary to the disruption this kind of churn has on the lives of people with disabilities and the impact on the quality of the services they receive.

Therefore, the undersigned members of CCD are eager to endorse the principles of the Domestic Workers' Bill Of Rights. Domestic workers deserve a living wage, basic benefits, employee protections, and dignity on the job. We particularly want to underscore that this bill, in contrast with past policy approaches to these issues over the years, seeks to avoid pitting the rights of domestic workers against the rights of people with disabilities, most significantly by including additional Medicaid funding with the aim of ensuring that wages and workplace issues can be addressed without cutting services. While some details may still need to be worked out, the overall approach this bill has taken is a model for ensuring that all affected communities benefit from systems change.

Domestic workers are an essential and valued part of the lives of people with disabilities. We applaud Senator Harris, Congresswoman Jayapal, and the National Domestic Workers Alliance for their efforts to secure the rights of this crucial workforce.

Signed,

American Association on Health and Disability
American Civil Liberties Union
Arc of the United States
Autistic Self Advocacy Network
Center for Public Representation
Justice in Aging
National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities
National Association of State Head Injury Administrators
National Respite Coalition
United Spinal Association