

2018 -- S 2220

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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2018

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JOINT RESOLUTION

RESPECTFULLY URGING THE DEPARTMENT OF BEHAVIORAL HEALTHCARE,  
DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES AND HOSPITALS AND THE EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF  
HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES TO INCREASE CERTAIN DIRECT AND HOME CARE  
WORKER WAGES

Introduced By: Senators DiPalma, Seveney, Euer, DaPonte, and Lombardo

Date Introduced: February 01, 2018

Referred To: Senate Finance

1           WHEREAS, An estimated 4,400 adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities  
2 are supported by the state in community-based settings; direct service professionals (DSPs) and  
3 job coaches, are trained staff that are engaged in activities of daily living and  
4 community/employment support; these employees earn wages that place them and their families  
5 below the poverty level; and

6           WHEREAS, The average DSP wage in Rhode Island is approximately \$11 per hour,  
7 which is below the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services poverty threshold for a  
8 family of 4; this workforce is often compelled to work many overtime hours or maintain a second  
9 job to support their families; many have to rely on public benefits such as Medicaid and food  
10 stamps, creating additional expenditures for state government; and

11           WHEREAS, Rhode Island has increased the minimum wage for the general workforce  
12 from \$7.40 in 2012 to \$9.60 in 2016, and to \$10.10 in 2017, for a 36 percent increase in five  
13 years. During the corresponding period, direct support professionals (DSP) and personal care  
14 attendants (PCA) have seen their combined average wages move from \$10.65 to \$10.82, or  
15 increase by 1.6 percent over 5 years. Our neighboring states of Massachusetts and Connecticut  
16 saw increases in the minimum wage of 37.5 percent (to \$11 in 2017) and 22 percent (to \$10.10 in  
17 2017) respectively. Over the same 5-year period, these 2 states increased their DSP/PCA wage to  
18 \$14.56 and \$12.19 respectively, compared with Rhode Island's \$10.82 per hour wage. And,

1 Massachusetts has committed to compensate their DPSs with a \$15.00/hour wage by 2018; and

2 WHEREAS, The lack of adequate wages for DSP employees who perform the  
3 challenging work of supporting persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities results in  
4 high employee turnover, estimated at 33 percent in Rhode Island; higher wages are proven to  
5 reduce staff turnover, improving stability and quality of services while reducing employer  
6 training costs; and

7 WHEREAS, Rising wages in several other sectors now mean, despite strenuous efforts to  
8 recruit new DSP workers and job coaches, agencies are experiencing staff vacancy rates of up to  
9 25 percent; excessive vacancies force employers to rely more on overtime, leading to staff  
10 burnout and driving up costs; this growing hiring crisis impedes the ability of community  
11 agencies to implement the state's obligations under the 2014 US Department of Justice  
12 Disabilities Act RI Settlement Agreement; and

13 WHEREAS, In addition, as the state's Medicaid program seeks to assist more  
14 beneficiaries requiring long-term services and supports in home and community-based settings,  
15 the demand for home care workers has increased, and wages for these workers has not kept pace  
16 with neighboring states, leading to high turnover and vacancy rates in the state's home care  
17 industry; now, therefore be it

18 RESOLVED, That this General Assembly of the State of Rhode Island and Providence  
19 Plantations hereby respectfully urges the Department of Behavioral Healthcare, Developmental  
20 Disabilities and Hospitals to increase the base-payment rates for licensed developmental  
21 disability organizations, an amount to be determined by the appropriations process, for the  
22 purpose of raising wages for direct support professionals and job coaches that is implemented: (1)  
23 By October 1, 2018; and (2) In a manner that meets specifications related to implementation and  
24 reporting approved by the Director of the Department of Behavioral Healthcare, Developmental  
25 Disabilities and Hospitals and the Secretary of Health and Human Services; and be it further

26 RESOLVED, That this General Assembly hereby further urges the Department of  
27 Behavioral Healthcare, Development Disabilities and Hospitals to implement said increase in the  
28 base-payment rates for licensed developmental disability organizations in a manner that results in  
29 direct support professionals and job coaches earning a base wage of not less than \$15 per hour by  
30 fiscal year 2022. The rate shall be adjusted annually by a percentage increase equal to the  
31 Consumer Price Index for Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers (CPI-W) or a successor  
32 index as calculated for the northeast region by the US Department of Labor; and be it further

33 RESOLVED, That this General Assembly hereby respectfully requests the Office of  
34 Internal Audit within the Office of Management and Budget to conduct a vender compliance

1 audit review after the implementation of the increase in base-rate payments in accordance with  
2 this resolution; and be it further

3         RESOLVED, That this General Assembly hereby respectfully requests the Executive  
4 Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS) to institute a one-time increase in the base-  
5 payment rates for home-care service providers to promote increased access to and an adequate  
6 supply of highly trained home health care professionals, in amount to be determined by the  
7 appropriations process, for the purpose of raising wages for personal care attendants and home  
8 health aides to be implemented by such providers: (1) By October 1, 2018; and (2) In a manner  
9 that meets specifications related to implementation and reporting approved by the secretary; and  
10 be it further

11         RESOLVED, That this General Assembly hereby further requests the EOHHS to  
12 implement said increase in the base-payment rates for home-care service providers in a manner  
13 that results in personal care attendants and home health aides earning a base wage of not less than  
14 \$15 per hour by fiscal year 2022. The rate shall be adjusted annually by a percentage increase  
15 equal to the Consumer Price Index for Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers (CPI-W) or a  
16 successor index as calculated for the northeast region by the US Department of Labor; and be it  
17 further

18         RESOLVED, That the Secretary of State be and hereby is authorized and directed to  
19 transmit duly certified copies of this resolution to the Governor of the State of Rhode Island, the  
20 Department of Behavioral Healthcare, Developmental Disabilities and Hospitals, the Office of  
21 Internal Audit within the Office of Management and Budget, and the Executive Office of Health  
22 and Human Services.

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