

Recognizing the Role of Direct Support Professionals Act

Sponsored by Senators Maggie Hassan (D-NH) & Susan Collins (R-ME)

The Problem:

Direct Support Professionals provide integral support to individuals who experience disabilities, such as assisting with communication, providing on-the-job coaching, and helping with daily living needs. These workers play a critical role in helping ensure that individuals who experiences disabilities can live independently and fully participate in their communities. But right now, there aren't enough workers to fill this critical need. Home- and community-based service providers struggle to recruit and retain Direct Support Professionals. A 2016 study by the National Core Indicators showed that Direct Support Professionals had a national turnover rate of 45 percent.

A lack of sound data compounds the problem. Federal agencies use data collected through the Bureau of Labor Statistics Standard Occupational Classification system to analyze workforce trends, but this system does not provide an accurate picture of current Direct Support Professional workforce challenges. This system classifies Direct Support Professionals under the broader category of "home health care aide," which includes all home health care occupations. As a result, it is impossible to accurately track and report workforce trends for Direct Support Professionals, often resulting in the underreporting of workforce needs and regional workforce shortages.

The Solution:

This bill would direct the Office of Management and Budget to revise the Standard Occupational Classification system to establish a separate code for Direct Support Professionals, ensuring better data on these pressing workforce challenges. By improving data collection, this bill will:

- Provide states and the federal government with more accurate information about the workforce trends for Direct Support Professionals to help identify workforce shortage areas and report accurate turnover rates.
- Help identify where to implement targeted workforce training programs for Direct Support Professionals so that trained workers can meet local workforce needs.
- Recognize the unique role that Direct Support Professionals play in supporting individuals who experience disabilities and raise awareness of critical workforce needs.

This legislation is supported by: the American Network of Community Options and Resources (ANCOR), the National Alliance for Direct Support Professionals (NADSP), the Arc of the United States, Autism Speaks, Autism Society of America, ABLE NH, the American Association on Health and Disability, Autistic Self Advocacy Network, Association of People Supporting Employment First (APSE), CommunicationFIRST, Easterseals, the Jewish Federations of North America, Justice in Aging, Lutheran Services – American Disability Network, National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities, National Association of State Head Injury Administrators, National Down Syndrome Congress, United Spinal Association, Cure SMA, TASH, National Dance Therapy Association, and the National Brain Injury Association.

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