

An Act Relative to Home Care S.358/H.630**Lead Sponsors: Sen. Patricia Jehlen, Rep. Aaron Vega and Rep. Carmine Gentile**

This legislation directs the Commonwealth to implement a consistent and rational wage and rate setting process for all essential home care workers that serve elders and persons with disabilities across the long-term care continuum. This bill would provide these workers with Enough Pay to Stay.

Homemakers, Home Health Aides, and ASAP (Aging Service Access Points) Case Managers are the backbone of the state's home care system. But turnover is far too high in this critical workforce due to the lack of consistent and adequate rates paid to home care providers. These dedicated workers are in desperate need of a wage and benefit increase to make ends meet. This bill would ensure that trained home care aides are paid at a rate that is 15% higher than the state minimum wage.

According to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, home health aide demand is anticipated to grow 46.7% and personal care aide demand by 37.4% between 2016-2026. The workforce needed to serve our state's aging population at home will not be sufficient to meet growing demand unless fundamental changes take place now.

The state's safety net of services and long term care supports is strained and in need of immediate investment. Recent data shows inadequate home health aide rates and a shortage of workers is forcing agencies to suspend and reduce home health aide contracts or terminate contracts with the ASAPs. Since February 2019, four agencies have pulled out of the Massachusetts ASAP Home Care Program affecting nearly 1,400 clients spanning from Cape Cod to the Merrimack Valley.

LTSS providers face unprecedented challenges to recruit and retain the highly trained workforce needed to provide quality care to clients in the community.

- Homemakers and Home Health Aides are among the 3rd and 4th fastest growing occupations in our nation; yet the lowest paid workforces in Massachusetts
- Personal Care Attendants (PCAs) and Certified Nursing Assistants (CNAs) have a consistent mechanism for setting wages and compensation. There is no such mechanism for home care aides. Home Health Aide rates have not seen an increase since **FY07** and Homemaker rates have not been adjusted since **FY15**.
- The Legislature approved much needed rate add-ons and/or wage and benefit increases for Certified Nursing Assistants (CNAs) (average wage - approximately \$16.12 an hour based on BLS data) and Personal Care Attendants (PCAs) – increasing their wage to \$15.75 per hour on July 1, 2020.
- A new independent salary and turnover study released by Mass Home Care in June 2019 found the ASAP Case Manager turnover rate was 21.9%, and the average starting salary for ASAP case managers was 16.4% below comparable positions at state agencies and private providers. The primary reason for Case Manager turnover reported by 50% of respondents was better salaries elsewhere.

This legislation reflects a commitment to provide these essential workers “**Enough Pay To Stay.**”