

* Bipartisan bill would eliminate wage inequities for those who provide private support to individuals with disabilities.

* Bill would allow states to apply for federal funds to better compensate direct support professionals.

* Legislation is supported by disability advocacy groups including Mosaic, headquartered in Nebraska, and other national disability organizations including ANCOR (American Network of Community Options and Resources), Lutheran Services of America, The Arc and United Cerebral Palsy.

WASHINGTON - Representative Lois Capps (D-CA) and Representative Lee Terry (R-NE) today introduced bipartisan legislation to aid professionals working in the disabilities community. The Capps/Terry bill would give states the ability to use federal funds to increase the wages for direct support professionals who provide supports to individuals of all ages with disabilities under the Medicaid program.

"The effort here is to help people with disabilities lead productive lives," Terry said. "We need to ensure that the people recruited as caregivers are truly qualified, reliable, and committed individuals who will support people with disabilities to become active, contributing members of their communities. Raising wages for direct support professionals is one way to compensate these individuals for their vital work."

□ Omaha-based Mosaic, a non-profit organization providing support and services to people with developmental disabilities, worked with Terry and Capps in formulating the legislation. Mosaic supports more than 235 individuals with disabilities in Omaha, with 265 staff members.

David Jacox, CEO at Mosaic said, "This bill would significantly increase our ability to recruit and retain direct support professionals. Everyone at Mosaic appreciates the commitment of Congressman Terry and Congresswoman Capps in their continued support for people with disabilities."

Most direct support professionals are women with families to support, working 40-hour workweeks at an average of almost \$9.00 an hour. That amounts to an annual salary of \$18,720, a figure below \$20,650, the 2007 federal poverty level for a family of four. This level of wages and benefits creates an unseen underclass system of workers.

"The freedom of all Americans with disabilities whose lives depend on the compassionate skills of direct support professionals is in serious danger," stated ANCOR CEO Renee Pietrangelo, Ph.D.

