

OMAHA, Neb. - Congressman Lee Terry, R-Nebraska, 2nd District, recognized Omaha-based non-profit, Mosaic, in the House of Representatives in Washington D.C. this week. Staff from Mosaic visited several members of Congress in Washington, D.C. to call for an end to the direct support workforce crisis threatening the quality of life for millions of people with disabilities. "At issue is the alarming shortage of direct support professionals nationwide and their need for better compensation," said Rich Carman, senior vice president of public policy at Mosaic. "Direct support services are funded through Medicaid reimbursements and state governments set the reimbursement rates, but the funding needs to keep pace with the economy and provide a living wage for direct support workers!"

VIDEO: [Terry Recognizes Mosaic at U.S. House of Representatives on C-SPAN](#)

The week beginning September 8 was designated National Direct Support Professionals Recognition Week by the U.S. Senate ([S. Res. 613](#)). The Resolution was introduced by Senator Ben Nelson of Nebraska. The goal is to promote the social and economic value that people with disabilities and the direct support professionals, DSPs, who support them bring to their local communities and to gain visibility for the DSP workforce wage crisis.

"Direct Support Professionals provide the critical daily supports seniors and people with disabilities need to live and work in the community," said Carman. "Millions of individuals with disabilities and elderly who

receive personal and very intimate supports from DSPs every day become victims of this workforce

shortage. As constituents of Congressman Lee Terry who represents Nebraska's Second District, we

thanked him for his leadership on the [Direct Support Professionals Fairness and Security Act](#) (H.R. 1279)."

Representing Mosaic in Washington, DC at the conference and rally on Capitol Hill were Mona McGee, senior policy analyst and governmental affairs director, Paula Bruland, nebraska operations director, and Sharon Walters, associate director of governmental affairs, from Neb.; Rich Carman, senior vice president of public policy, from Con.; Justin, DSP, and Leah Gibson, DSP, from Utah; and Terry Olson, executive director of Mosaic Delaware, and Rhonda Patrick, DSP, from Del. and Billie McMiller, 2nd vice chairperson of the Mosaic Board of Directors from Texas.

"We were very proud to go to Washington during National Direct Support Professionals Recognition Week," said Carman. "In talks with members of Congress from several states, our DSPs demonstrated the same passion, commitment and professionalism that they do on the job here at home every day."

About Direct Support Professionals

Direct Support Professionals, often referred to as caregivers, personal assistants or home care are vital to the ultimate success or failure of community-based long-term supports. DSPs build close, trusted relationships with the millions of seniors and people with disabilities they assist each day. They work in community settings assisting people with disabilities with medications, preparing and eating meals, dressing, mobility, and handling daily affairs. Unfortunately, these critical supports are being threatened by a growing workforce crisis.

Staggering National Statistics

The U.S. Department of Labor statistics show that the average U.S. worker makes about \$16.75 an hour, while the average DSP makes about \$9.26 an hour for the close, nurturing and intimate critical support they provide. Many DSPs work two jobs to make ends meet for their own families. The daily challenges

these front-line workers face are both physically and emotionally demanding. Inadequate wages have led to high turnover (as high as 86% in some residential settings) and ongoing vacancies in the direct support workforce.

Nationwide, there are approximately 1.4 million individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities who require professional support in order to live and work in their own communities rather than an institution. Unfortunately, there are only about 875,000 direct support workers serving this one segment of the disabled population. DSP positions will continue to be among the fastest growing jobs in America as 70 million Americans will become 65 or older by 2030, twice as many 65 and older Americans as there were in 2000. By 2020, the number of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities is anticipated to grow to 1.4 million and the number of DSPs for that population alone will need to increase to 1.2 million. Currently direct support positions represent 2% of the entire American workforce.

About Mosaic

Mosaic provides individualized services, living options, work choices, spiritual nurture and advocacy to people with disabilities across 14 states and Great Britain through the work of 5,000 employees. Mosaic is an affiliated social ministry organization of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, a recognized service organization of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod and a member of Lutheran Services in America. Mosaic is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization. For more information visit www.mosaicinfo.org .

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