

**Washington, D.C.** -- In conjunction with National Direct Support Recognition Week designated by the U.S. Senate

( [S. Res. 613](#) ), the American Network of Community Options and Resources ( [ANCOR](#) ) assembled hundreds of Direct Support Professionals (DSP), individuals with disabilities and their families from across the country to rally Capitol Hill this week. At issue, is the alarming shortage of DSP workers in this country and their inability to earn a living wage.

U.S. Representatives Lois Capps (D-CA) and Lee Terry (R-NE) addressed the crowd of more than 200, offering appreciation for the supports and services offered by DSPs, and words of encouragement for pending legislation to address the workforce wage crisis. "Not only do you make a difference every day, you're going to make a difference here on the Hill today," said Representative Terry.

"If we don't do a better job of improving the wages of dedicated individuals... we cannot ensure the long-term viability of our current workforce," said Representative Capps.

Representatives Capps and Terry introduced the [Direct Support Professionals Fairness and Security Act](#) (H.R. 1279) into the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress, a measure that has received considerable attention on Capitol Hill and currently has 127 co-sponsors from both sides of the aisle. H.R. 1279 amends the Medicaid program (Title XIX of the Social Security Act) to provide federal funds that will enable states to increase wages to targeted direct support professionals providing supports to people with disabilities.

"Low DSP wages coupled with emotionally and sometimes physically difficult work often leads to high turnover and disruption of services for a particularly fragile group of Americans," said Renee Pietrangelo, ANCOR CEO. "Millions of elderly and individuals with disabilities who receive personal and very intimate supports from DSPs every day become victims of this workforce shortage." Pietrangelo stated further that DSPs deserve, "respect and fair compensation for valued work."

## Direct Support Workforce 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.

\* Direct support professional hourly wages increased only \$1.55 from 1996 to 2006, versus an increase of \$2.92 for public direct support positions during the same period;

\* The average hourly wage for a direct support professional is \$9.26, compared to the national wage of \$16.75;

\* Reports show that vacancy rates for direct support professionals increased 5.8% in 2004 to 6.7% in 2006; 75% of all direct support positions turn over each year;

\* The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics projects the demand for this workforce to increase more than 41% between 2004 and 2014.

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 be age 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 all direct support positions represent 2% of the entire American workforce.

## About ANCOR

The [American Network of Community Options and Resources](#) is a national association representing more than 850 private providers of community living and employment supports and services to more than 385,000 individuals with disabilities. As a nonprofit organization, ANCOR successfully addresses the needs and interests of private providers before Congress and federal agencies, continually advocating for the crucial role private providers play in enhancing and supporting the lives of people with disabilities and their families. The ANCOR [National Advocacy Campaign](#) was created to provide a focus on the critical direct support workforce issue and establish national policy to address the DSP workforce issue.

