

Representative Lois Capps (D-CA) and Representative Lee Terry (R-NE) introduced this 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.

Below is a summary of the bill. [Click here](#) for the full text.

- Designed as an option to states and would provide a financial incentive to states with additional federal funding to reimburse private providers for the purpose of increasing wages and wage-related costs for specific direct support professionals.
- Designed to eliminate the wage gap and assure at least equal wages paid to private employees as those paid to public employees in a state.
- Eligible states would receive enhanced Federal medical assistance percentage (FMAP) for five years to increase wages.
- In order to receive the enhanced FMAP, states have to submit a five-year plan and must assure continuation of increased wage rate after the five-year period.
- State plan must be developed with private providers, individuals with disabilities and family members, and direct support professionals.
- Provides for annual indexing of wages at the end of five-year period.
- Targets the increased FMAP to cover direct support professionals working for private employers who provide supports and services to people with disabilities who are eligible for and receiving Medicaid under the state plan personal care option for personal assistance, under the rehabilitation option for rehabilitation or habilitation, for home health services, for home and community-based services under section 1915(c) or section 1115 waivers, and for intermediate care facility services for persons with mental retardation and related conditions.
- Provides for federal funding for state planning grants.
- Mandates a General Accountability Office (GAO) study on recruitment and retention.
- Mandates Inspector General Audit of progress in reducing/eliminating wage gap.



