

ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION No. 176

STATE OF NEW JERSEY 219th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED JULY 20, 2020

Sponsored by:

Assemblywoman VALERIE VAINIERI HUTTLE

District 37 (Bergen)

SYNOPSIS

Urges State and federal government to continue funding direct support professional wage increase until end of COVID-19 pandemic.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.



1 **AN ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION** urging the State and federal
2 government to continue funding the wage increase for direct
3 support professionals until the end of the coronavirus 2019
4 pandemic in New Jersey.

5
6 **WHEREAS**, A direct support professional is a person who assists an
7 individual with an intellectual and development disability to lead
8 a self-directed life and contribute to the community, assists with
9 activities of daily living if needed, and encourages attitudes and
10 behaviors that enhance community inclusion; and

11 **WHEREAS**, Direct support professionals (DPS) provide a broad
12 range of support to individuals with disabilities, including:
13 preparation of meals; helping with medications; assisting with
14 bathing, dressing, and other aspects of daily living; assisting
15 individuals with physical disabilities in accessing their
16 environment; providing transportation to school, work, religious
17 and recreational activities; and helping with general daily affairs,
18 such as assisting with financial matters, medical appointments,
19 and personal interests; and

20 **WHEREAS**, While DSP work hard to provide crucial assistance to
21 individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities,
22 many DSP continue to earn low wages, which results in high
23 turnover and vacancy rates in the industry and workforce
24 instability; and

25 **WHEREAS**, Low wages have contributed to the dire shortage of
26 DSP in the State that is threatening the safety and health of
27 individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities; and

28 **WHEREAS**, The coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic
29 has exposed many essential workers to the risk of infection and
30 has magnified the need for appropriate compensation for DSP, as
31 they continue to perform high-risk and demanding work often
32 going beyond the normal scope of work and working without
33 personal protective equipment; and

34 **WHEREAS**, On April 29, 2020, the Department of Human Services
35 announced that \$24 million in State and federal resources would
36 be allocated for a temporary wage increase of \$3 per hour for
37 DPS until July 31,2020; and

38 **WHEREAS**, The risk of exposure to COVID-19 will persist in the
39 State; it is imperative that both the State and federal government
40 continue to fund an increase in DPS wages until the end of the
41 COVID-19 pandemic, as DPS continue to work on the front lines
42 to care for one of the State's most vulnerable populations during
43 this public health crisis; now, therefore,

44
45 **BE IT RESOLVED** *by the General Assembly of the State of New*
46 *Jersey:*

47
48 1. This House respectfully urges that the State and federal
49 government continue to allocate funds towards wage increases for

1 direct support professionals until the end of both the state of
2 emergency and the public health emergency declared in response to
3 the coronavirus disease 2019 pandemic.

4
5 2. Copies of this resolution, as filed with the Secretary of State,
6 shall be transmitted by the Clerk of the General Assembly to the
7 Governor, the Commissioner of Human Services, the United States
8 President, and the United States Secretary of Health and Human
9 Services.

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11
12 STATEMENT

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14 This resolution urges the State and federal government to
15 continue funding the wage increase for direct support professionals
16 (DSP) until the end of the coronavirus disease 2019 pandemic.

17 A direct support professional is a person who assists an
18 individual with an intellectual and development disability to lead a
19 self-directed life and contribute to the community. DSP provide a
20 broad range of support to individuals with disabilities, including:
21 preparation of meals; helping with medications; assisting with
22 bathing, dressing, and other aspects of daily living; assisting
23 individuals with physical disabilities in accessing their
24 environment; providing transportation to school, work, religious
25 and recreational activities; and helping with general daily affairs,
26 such as assisting with financial matters, medical appointments, and
27 personal interests.

28 While DSP work hard to provide crucial assistance to individuals
29 with intellectual and developmental disabilities, many DSP continue
30 to earn low wages, which results in high turnover and vacancy rates
31 in the industry and workforce instability. Low wages have
32 contributed to the dire shortage of DSP in the State and this
33 workforce instability is especially concerning given the current state
34 of emergency and the public health emergency declared in response
35 to the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic. The
36 COVID-19 pandemic has exposed many essential workers to the
37 risk of infection and has magnified the need for appropriate
38 compensation for DSP, as they continue to perform high-risk and
39 demanding work.

40 On April 29, 2020, the Department of Human Services
41 announced that \$24 million in State and federal resources would be
42 allocated for a temporary wage increase of \$3 per hour for DPS
43 until July 31, 2020. The risk of exposure to COVID-19 will persist
44 in the State; it is imperative that both the State and federal
45 government continue to fund an increase in DPS wages until the
46 end of the COVID-19 pandemic, as DPS continue to work on the
47 front lines to care for one of the State's most vulnerable populations
48 during this public health crisis.