

## **The Home Care Jobs Innovation Fund:**

### **Investing in Recruitment and Retention of Home Care Workers in New York**

Home care workers, including home health aides and personal care aides, provide essential support that enables older adults and individuals with disabilities to remain in their homes, including assistance with daily tasks such as eating, bathing, and dressing. They comprise one of the largest and fastest-growing occupational groups in New York State: the number of home care workers in the state is projected to grow from 325,000 in 2014 to 450,000 by 2024.

The increased demand for home care workers is driven by population aging and the shift from institutional to home and community-based long-term care. However, the poor quality of home care jobs—including low compensation, limited training, and minimal advancement opportunities—pushes many workers toward other employment sectors, especially as the economy improves. New York is already facing a home care workforce shortage as a result. At a February 2017 State Assembly hearing, legislators heard that home care agencies have been turning away potential clients—leading to unnecessary nursing home admissions—due to a shortage of workers.

Unless policymakers take action now, the gap between the need for home care and the supply of workers will continue to worsen. The Department of Health has taken an important step to address this problem by establishing the [Medicaid Managed Long-Term Care Workforce Investment Program](#) to enhance training for all direct care workers in long-term care. To further strengthen the home care workforce, PHI proposes that Governor Cuomo and the New York State Legislature create the Home Care Jobs Innovation Fund—to invest in pilot projects throughout the state that test innovative strategies for recruiting and retaining home care workers.

### **The Home Care Jobs Innovation Fund**

The Home Care Jobs Innovation Fund would be a dedicated pool of funding for pilot projects that improve recruitment and retention among home care workers. Example interventions might include: better screening for high-quality candidates, enhanced orientation programs for new employees, and new technology systems to improve communication. Pilot projects could also test the introduction of job supports that encourage and enable home care workers to stay in the industry, such as transportation funds, scholarship programs, and retention bonuses.

PHI recommends that this fund last a minimum of three years to allow sufficient time to measure its impact, and that the state consider funding at least five entities. To ensure that successful results are documented and replicable, we also recommend that program evaluation be considered a valid use of the funding.

### **Eligibility for the Home Care Jobs Innovation Fund**

A range of entities throughout the state could be eligible to apply for the Home Care Jobs Innovation Fund, including but not limited to: home care agencies, workforce development organizations with experience in home care, and organizations that support consumers in the

Consumer-Directed Personal Assistance Program. Through the award process, the fund administrator could ensure that recipients represent all regions of the state, serve a diverse group of clients, and test a variety of recruitment and retention strategies. PHI recommends that eligibility for the funds should not be restricted to entities that are registered with Medicaid.

### **Impact of the Home Care Jobs Innovation Fund**

Policymakers could use the pilot project findings to identify practices that may be implemented on a larger scale as part of the state's efforts to address the home care workforce shortage. Together with the Workforce Investment Program, the Home Care Jobs Innovation Fund could become an important component of a comprehensive, long-term strategy to ensure that home care workers have the support they need to stay on the job and that home care consumers have access to the care they need in their homes and communities.

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