

May 15, 2020

Governor Tony Evers
15 East, State Capitol
Madison WI, 53702

Dear Governor Evers;

We write on behalf of members of the Governor's Task Force on Caregiving created through Executive Order # 11. During the COVID-19 crisis Task Force stakeholders continue to focus on their charge to recommend strategies to attract and retain a strong direct care workforce and to support families providing care to their loved ones with disabilities and older adults. On May 14, the Task Force took up one item of specific relevance to workforce needs during the COVID-19 pandemic. Members voted to forward the below recommendation to you for consideration and inclusion in future policy. It is our intent that the elements of a proposed inclusive definition of "health care provider" will improve conditions for the direct care workforce and the people they support.

The following language was discussed and passed by the Task Force through super majority vote:

"Some states are expanding their COVID-19 definition of "health care provider" to specifically include providers of home and community-based services (community health providers) for people with disabilities and older adults as part of the recognized essential workforce that is keeping vulnerable populations safe, while also risking their own health by providing essential personal cares that cannot be completed with social distancing. People with disabilities and older adults sometimes live and receive care in congregate settings such as group homes, community-based residential facilities or nursing homes, where COVID-19 spread and fatality rates have been disproportionately high. People with disabilities and older adults who receive care in their homes are also at risk when receiving personal cares. Ensuring that Wisconsin's COVID-19 definition of health care provider is inclusive will ensure that these community-based direct/personal care workers and their employers, including workers in the self-directed care program and paid family caregivers, can access all appropriate benefits, flexibilities and protections.

Proposal: Wisconsin should, in all COVID-19 response planning and policies, adopt a definition of health care provider that includes any employee or any provider of support to people with I/DD, people with physical disabilities, older adults, individuals with mental health needs, including substance use, and who is providing direct care and support essential to activities of daily living and independence funded through any state or federal program, including Medicaid Home and Community-Based Services waivers."

The Task Force will continue to meet virtually as members prepare additional recommendations on strategies to attract and retain a strong direct care workforce and to support families providing care to their loved ones with disabilities and older adults. We stand ready to be of any further assistance during these trying times.

Regards,

Lisa Pugh, Co-Chair
Todd Costello, Co-Chair

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