

Senator DiPalma March 8, 2022 Press Conference State House Library 3 PM  
Maureen Maigret Remarks

As I stand here today in the midst of a H+C care workforce crisis there are more than 100 folks waiting for home care services -- some wait more than 3 months.

So I want to thank Sen DiPalma for his tireless work to address this crisis and to promote fair and equitable wages for our direct care staff

I have advocated for a strengthened home and community care system of care for several decades – as a former member of the House, as Director of Elderly Affairs and through my advocacy work with the Senior Agenda Coalition.

Let's face facts. Most folks want to be at home if they need supports and care – And it is the clear law of the land to help folks live in the least restrictive settings – Yet we have failed to build a system of care that allows, this largely because we have historically failed to recognize the value of our direct care workers -- the invaluable but undervalued workers who care for our loved ones – our older adults who need home care services to stay at home and out of nursing homes, those young and old who have physical disabilities or behavioral health needs who need support to thrive and live in the community.

Data from the BLS show in 2020 in RI the avg wage was for HHA was less than \$15/hour and Nsg Assistants slightly above \$16. These low wages do not come close to meeting one's basic needs forcing workers to work more than one job or, as more are doing, just abandoning this type of work altogether for better pay. And that was before we faced 7% inflation and gas prices reaching \$5/gal or more!

Today is International Womens' Day. I will end by noting the majority of direct care staff are women, many are women of color. Let us commit to change the historical wage inequities experienced by these workers. A Rate Setting Commission is long overdue. It will surely lead to fair and competitive rates that will help providers to recruit and retain this needed workforce so none of our loved ones will have to wait more than 3 months to receive care.