



Developing a 2022 State Policy Agenda to Support the Workforce Behind the Workforce

The Helping Community Policy Group’s mission is “to advance federal and state policies that value and support those in the helping communities – paid and unpaid – in their vital roles.” The experiences from COVID-19 have shown the essential nature of this workforce and the fragility of the support currently provided for it. At the federal level, this recognition has produced policy actions to strengthen this workforce through major federal investments – in child care, in direct care, and in community-based health and other services. At the state level, it has produced new efforts to recognize this workforce, including the use of this new federal funding.

The Group’s specific state work during the 2021 session of the General Assembly was to press for an inclusive state process to maximize the use of federal funds directed to this workforce, expressed in House Concurrent Resolution 9, and to take specific actions to strengthen the Direct Care Registry, in House File 692. The Group’s specific federal work in 2021 was to encourage members of Iowa’s Congressional delegation to support federal investments in a 21st Century Caregiving and Education Workforce.

This work remains relevant and critical. In addition, the Helping Community Policy Group now is developing state legislative and executive branch recommendations for action to advance this work during the 2022 legislative session, based upon the goals set out in HCR9 and taking into account new responsibilities and opportunities for state action through federal funding.

As much as possible, the Helping Community Policy Group wants to align its 2022 state agenda with those of its member organizations and others with policy agendas related to this helping workforce. We will be asking state legislators and members of the Governor’s administration to consider actions in the following areas to:

- Establish a state Helping Community Worker Bill of Rights that ensures recognition of the needs of the workforce behind the workforce, including within public employment and through state contracts for health care, early care and education, and human services funded by state government.*

- Establish planning, design, and oversight structures that ensure those providing frontline services and the people they serve are represented and their voices and perspectives are heard.
- Revise Future Ready Iowa or other, companion state workforce development activities to recognize and include this frontline workforce and its compensation as part of Iowa's overall economic development strategy.
- Expand on the initial investments in home and community-based services, child care, preschool, direct care, and home-and-community-based services federal funds to build and sustain that workforce, ensuring maintenance of state effort.
- Provide supports, respite, and access to care for those providing such help to family members or others in the community on an unpaid basis.
- Expand the Iowa Direct Care Worker Registry and Create a Complementary Voluntary Public Portal of Caregivers as outlined in HF692.

The Iowa Helping Community Policy Group is in the process of developing this agenda and to do so in ways that align, to the greatest possible extent, with other organizational agendas working on specific parts of this agenda. The Group will be reaching out to other organizations developing Iowa legislative agendas in doing so.

Policy Committee (in formation):

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* Charles Bruner is researching legislation from other states related to compensation, working conditions, and rights for workers in "essential jobs" and in frontline health and human services positions, including provisions requiring those receiving payment from the state to engage in certain practices as employers of those workers.