



Iowa Helping Community Policy Group

Advancing federal and state policies that value and support those in the helping communities – paid and unpaid – in their vital roles.

HELPERS AND THE 2022 ELECTIONS POLICY SUMMIT: DEVELOPING EFFECTIVE MESSAGES AND MESSENGERS

Media Expert Panelists: Peter Fenn and Kathie Obradovich

July 27th 2022

Policy Summit Agenda

About the Iowa Helping Community Policy Group

About Iowa Helpers and the Current Status of this **Most Essential Workforce**

About Public Policy Opportunities and Imperatives

About Electoral Education and Advocacy Opportunities to Increase Dialogue and Action – candidates, voters, and workers/advocates

Discussion with Media Experts – Where the Election Stands Today and What Options Are Most Promising to Advance Attention and Action

About the Iowa Helping Community Policy Group

- Established in June 2020 to heighten dialogue during the 2020 election on the essential role direct care, child care, community health, and other workers in the helping and education fields play in society and the economy – and the need for greater public support and funding for them
- Continued in 2021 and 2022 to inform legislative and executive actions at the federal and state levels in making and implementing investments in the helping workforce
- Mission: advance federal and state policies that value those in the helping fields – paid and unpaid – in their vital roles.
- Type: All volunteer, nonpartisan group of individuals and organizations who want to participate
- Website: www.iowahelpers.org
- Facebook group: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/751446435533986>

About Iowa Helpers

Overall, nurses, health professionals, social workers, counselors, child care and preschool teachers, and direct care workers (in-home and within health care institutions), and community health workers represent **12 percent (180,000) of Iowa's workforce**

These represent **half of the highest demand jobs** in Iowa and highest opportunities for job growth

Through Medicare, Medicaid, public health, the child development block grant, and preschool funding, **public dollars finance over half of current investments in this workforce** – because they represent an underlying social infrastructure for the economy and society

About Frontline Iowa Helpers and Their Essential Role in Society

80,000 helpers are in frontline nonprofessional occupations – direct care, child care, or community health – and played a critical, **most essential worker role** during the pandemic but are essential to Iowa's economy at all times. Increasing their numbers and compensation provides multiple benefits (ROIs):

- **Benefits to people served:** maintaining quality of life, improving self-sufficiency and productivity in own work (and, for child care, in school readiness and success). and reducing personal and family stress
- **Benefits to workers:** offering family-sustaining employment and careers in jobs for which they are suited, improving family economic security and reducing poverty, reducing burnout
- **Benefits to economy:** enabling people served to work and be productive employees, providing new jobs and sources of work in the economy, putting resources into the local economy, and reducing demands upon safety net services

The Challenge and Opportunity for Most Essential Frontline Helpers

The 80,000 frontline direct care, child care, and community health workers have a **median hourly wage (\$13.50) at 72 percent percent of the median Iowa wage (\$18.80)**

They are over **60 percent more likely to live in poverty** and struggle economically to raise their own families.

Their jobs won't be replaced by automation, technology, or artificial intelligence and are an **increasing share of the workforce and contributor to achieving full employment.**

They **require public investment** as part of the infrastructure that supports the private sector part of the economy.

About Public Policy Opportunities and Imperatives

As part of the country's human capital infrastructure, President Biden has proposed a 21st century caregiving and education workforce with increases (\$87 billion annually and 2+ million jobs) in the number, compensation, and availability of a direct care, child care, and community health workforce.

The CARES Act made initial investments to sustain these workforces during Covid-19. The American Rescue Plan Act provided a further round of federal funding to support this workforce (over \$70 billion in child care, home and community-based services, and community health) to support this essential workforce.

Iowa is taking action to use these federal funds in child care and direct care to advance this frontline workforce, including direct payments to workers.

Next step is making permanent these federal investments and making commensurate state investments.

About Electoral Education and Advocacy Opportunities

- **Candidates** like to talk about the value of such helpers (paid and unpaid) and take credit for any role they play in supporting this workforce.
- **Voters** view this workforce very favorably and recognize them as heroes/heroines in the response to the Covid-19 pandemic.
- **Workers** represent a significant part of the voting electorate and are located throughout the state and listened to regarding the needs of those they serve.
- When asked specifically, voters want elected officials to make more investments and pay greater policy attention to this workforce, but this **is not viewed (now) as a campaign issue or reason to vote**. General support for this workforce is broadly shared by ALL Iowans, including support across age, family status, income, and political party affiliation.
- **Iowa is a purple state** and affecting one or two percent of the vote is a big deal. **Getting issues elected involves getting candidates to speak out, getting advocates to mobilize, and getting voters to listen and act.**

Activities Directed to Candidates

Submit and publish responses to Iowa Helping Community Policy Group candidate questionnaire to all candidates (responses to be posted on www.iowahelpers.org beginning August 10, 2022)

Provide information to candidates on importance of policies (state and federal) to support this workforce and fact sheets and talking points on ways to incorporate them into campaigns

Participate with Common Good Iowa in electoral education around children and families, with particular emphasis upon developing the workforce

Activities Directed to Voters

Submit letters to the editor and guest opinions on Iowa's helpers and the 2022 election.

Work with organization members to inform members about the Iowa Helping Community Policy Group, its electoral activities, and its resources about the helping workforce.

Activities Directed to Workers and Advocates

Grow the facebook group:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/751446435533986>

Enlist workers/advocates to contact candidates and ask them to complete survey and speak out on essential worker

Provide talking points to workers/advocates for meeting with candidates at their events or directly

Provide sample letters-to-the-editor to provide to local media

Encourage workers and advocates to be politically active (volunteer for candidates, share views and materials with colleagues and friends, etc.)

Recognizing and Changing (Using) the Political Landscape

Peter Fenn, Fenn Communications Group

political strategist, consultant, television commentator and owner of Fenn Communications Group, a political and public affairs media firm based in Washington, DC. His firm has worked in over 300 campaigns, from presidential to mayoral, and represented a number of policy organizations and Fortune 500 companies..



Kathie Obradovich, Iowa Capital Dispatch

editor of Iowa Capital Dispatch, with more than 30 years covering Iowa government and politics, most recently as political columnist and opinion editor for the Des Moines Register. She is a leading voice on Iowa politics and makes regular appearances on state, national and international news programs.



The 2022 Elections: Opportunities for Impact

- What are likely to be issues that receive predominant electoral attention at state and federal levels and is there a way to raise essential worker issues as a part of that attention?
- What are the opportunities to make the 80,000+ essential workers better recognized as an important voter base in the campaign?
- What can the Iowa Helping Community Policy Group do to “get issues” (as well as candidates who support them) elected in 2022?