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Shapiro Administration Highlights Governor’s Investments in Pennsylvania’s Direct Care Workforce, Calls for Increased Minimum Wage for All Workers

*An investment of **\$21 million** is helping to bring certain Direct Care Workers to \$15 an hour; workers [must complete form](#) to finalize raise.*

[Governor Shapiro’s proposed 2026–27 budget](#) once again calls on the General Assembly to **raise Pennsylvania’s minimum wage to \$15 an hour** beginning January 1, 2027.

Harrisburg, PA – Pennsylvania Department of Human Services Secretary Dr. Val Arkoosh today advocated for continued investments in Pennsylvania’s workforce alongside SEIU Healthcare direct care workers (DCWs) and celebrated recent investments that increased wages for this workforce. Because of investments made in **[Governor Josh Shapiro’s 2025-26 Budget](#)**, the hourly rates paid to certain DCWs support a \$15 hourly wage, personal time off, and recognizes the cost of health insurance.

These workers are seeing **increases of \$1-\$5 per hour** from their current hourly wage. Because wages are decided between DCWs and the individual they work with, both employees and the person they work for [must fill out, sign, and return a form](#) in order to receive the raise. Forms **must be submitted and received by May 8, 2026**, to receive pay retroactive to January 1, 2026.

“Direct care workers are vital to making sure that older Pennsylvanians and people with disabilities can live as independently as possible and with dignity in a home they choose. These professionals give so much of themselves to care for others, so we must support them and pay them fairly,” said **Secretary Arkoosh**. “Thanks to advocacy from SEIU and bipartisan investments in Governor Shapiro’s 2025-26 budget, we are getting that done, and now it’s long past time to raise the minimum wage to \$15 an hour for *all* of Pennsylvania’s workers.”

DCWs are a lifeline for individuals who require assistance to live independently and families that may not be able to provide their loved ones with 24/7 care. Through

Medicaid, older Pennsylvanians and adults with physical disabilities are able to get assistance to live with more independence in their own home rather than a group or facility setting. Through the “participant-directed model,” Medicaid recipients who need long-term care can choose to hire and manage their own DCWs directly to help with the services, supports, and daily assistance they need to live safely in their homes.

“Thanks to this new wage increase, I’m making \$17.50 an hour. And that difference is real,” said **caregiver Suzzane Ott**, from Franklin, PA. “It’s about stability. And it means our work is finally being recognized as real, professional work. We are a critical part of the healthcare system. We help keep people out of hospitals and nursing homes and make it possible for people to live at home with dignity.”

“In 2025, Governor Shapiro invited me to sit on the House floor as he proposed \$21 million for home care wage increases. With the federal match, that \$21 million grew to nearly \$48 million,” said **caregiver Cheryl Harp**, from Harrisburg, PA. “For the first time, I may be able to get health insurance. Do you know what that means to me? I have to take care of myself to take care of my mom. Now maybe I can.”

Governor Shapiro’s 2025-26 budget invested **\$21 million** in home and community-based services rates to increase wages, retroactive to January 1, 2026, for DCWs who provide in-home services to more than 7,700 adults with physical disabilities and older Pennsylvanians in the participant-directed model through Community HealthChoices, the OBRA Waiver and the Act 150 programs. The investment increased rates to support higher wages, time off for sick or personal leave, and the cost of health insurance for approximately **8,500 workers** who are employed directly by the individual they care for and therefore do not have employer-sponsored benefits offered by larger employers. [Governor Shapiro’s proposed 2026-27 budget](#) sustains the new investments in this critical workforce.

Secretary Arkoosh also recently met with DCWs to hear more about how these investments will have a positive effect on their lives – **watch** [Lynn](#), [Angela](#), and [Khebed](#) discuss what it means to be a direct care worker for other people and how Governor Shapiro’s budget investments are helping them.

To build on the momentum of this investment in Pennsylvania workers in the 2025-26 budget, [Governor Shapiro’s proposed 2026–27 budget](#) once again calls on the General Assembly to **raise Pennsylvania’s minimum wage to \$15 an hour** beginning January 1, 2027. This commonsense reform would boost consumer spending, reduce turnover for employers, and improve workers’ health and economic stability while also delivering significant savings for taxpayers.

By raising wages for nearly 61,000 workers who currently rely on Medicaid and earn less than \$15 an hour, the Commonwealth would reduce reliance on public assistance,

saving taxpayer resources. In addition, higher wages would generate roughly \$80 million per year in new revenue, strengthening Pennsylvania's fiscal position while helping working families get ahead.

Learn more about [Governor Shapiro's 2025-26 budget investments](#) and his continued commitment to strengthening Pennsylvania through the [proposed 2026-27 budget](#).

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