



For Immediate Release

Dec. 3, 2020

Contact: Salli Christenson, Arc Michigan, 800 292-7851, ext. 130

## Health and safety of persons with disabilities at risk without continuing \$2 increase for Direct Care Workers

*International Day of Persons with Disabilities highlights need to protect vulnerable Michiganders*

As Michigan commemorates International Day of Persons with Disabilities, the health and safety of this vulnerable population remain at risk as the \$2 increase for Direct Care Workers is set to expire this month.

Without extending the increase for Direct Care Workers, individuals with disabilities may lose the help and support they rely on. Lower wages will result in higher turnover and vacant positions within service providers, compromising the needs of individuals with disabilities.

Governor Gretchen Whitmer declared Dec. 3 as Persons with Disabilities Day in Michigan, stating that “we must continue working around the clock to protect people with disabilities and compromised immune systems. Today is a time to recommit ourselves to creating a state where persons with disabilities have equal rights and freedom, and to dismantle the barriers Michiganders with disabilities face every day.”

Michigan is home to more than 50,000 Direct Care Workers, caring for people with mental illnesses and developmental disabilities every day. Direct Care Workers provide much-needed personal care, training, practical and emotional support and respite to an estimated 100,000 of Michigan’s most vulnerable residents. Nearly a million Michigan residents rely directly or indirectly on the value Direct Care Workers provide.

There is currently a 37 percent turnover rate and an average starting wage of \$11.44 per hour for Direct Care Workers in Michigan. These skilled workers are woefully underpaid and further reduction will drive them to seek other employment.

**To protect the well-being of Michiganders, policymakers must make the wage increase permanent before time runs out.**

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