

Recommendations to Address Systemic Racism and Economic Injustice in the Nevada Home Care Industry

Workforce Demographics

- Vast majority are women – 88%.
- Disproportionately workers of color – 58%.
- Half of workforce lives in poverty.
- Half of workforce relies on public healthcare.

Reimbursement Rate Stagnant for Nearly 20 Years

- NV's reimbursement rate of \$17.56/hr is almost the same as the rate set in 2003.
- If the rate had kept pace with inflation, the 2020 rate should have been \$23.81/hr.
- Companion and respite are reimbursed at sub-minimum wage (\$8/hr and \$10/hr)

Real Wages Have Fallen

- A single home care worker residing in the Las Vegas metro area with no children needs \$15.58/hr to survive.
- The current median wage is \$11.28
- Wages decreased by 10% between 2010 and 2020 when adjusted for inflation, and this doesn't include recent cost increases.

NV Medicaid Rate is 35% Less Than Private Pay

- Medicaid rate: \$17.56/hr.
- Private pay rate: \$27.00/hr.
- Median NV home care wage: \$11.28/hr.
- Median wage in NV across all industries: \$18.22/hr.
- ***The market shows what the cost of home care should be, so why is the state paying so much less?***

Our Work Has Been Historically Devalued

“The roots of this inequity go back to slavery, when many Black women were forced into caregiving roles. And this didn’t end with Emancipation. Many freed slaves were coerced into indentured servitude caring for white families, and then were excluded, along with other women of color, from higher paying, less physically taxing jobs... These jobs were later left out of early 20th century labor protections that elevated many other occupations.”

-Recent Boston Foundation report

The report strongly recommends increasing the minimum wage and reimbursement rates to address:

- The historic devaluing of work done by women and people of color.
- The egregiously low investment in the industry as a whole.
- The lack of investment in services for Medicaid recipients who are 64% people of color.

Systemic Racism Holds Down Workers and Clients of All Races

- There's a direct link between quality of our jobs and quality of care.
- High turnover leads to service gaps, painful breaks in relationships, and loss of knowledge and care continuity.
- Low pay leads to workforce shortages making it extremely difficult to find backup caregivers and caregivers able to serve rural communities.

Nevada's Rate Lags Far Behind Rest of Country While Our Population Ages Faster

- Nevada's reimbursement is about \$3/hr less than the national average.
- While our state has one of the lowest reimbursement rates, we also have one of the fastest aging populations.
- From 2011-2018 Nevada's 65 and older population increased by 40%.
- Nevada's growth rate for the age 85 and older population is double the national rate.
- ***This has created a workforce shortage crisis.***

Home Care Unions in Other States Are Leading Change

- 2021 Colorado budget provision requires state-funded home care workers be paid a \$15/hr minimum as of Jan. 2022.
- Current reimbursement rate for personal care provided outside Denver County (which has a higher rate and min. wage) is \$24.80/hr.

Recommendation for Acknowledging Systemic Racism

Following Governor Sisolak's proclamation that racism is a public health crisis, the HCESB recommends that DHHS publicly acknowledge that poverty wages paid to home care workers and low investment in these essential services is a historic product of systemic racism. These problems hurt home care workers and quality of care for clients of all races. There is a moral imperative to solve this crisis by increasing the reimbursement rates and minimum wage for the industry as recommended by this board.

The Urgent Need for Further Investigation

- Thousands of workers' share our lived experiences with racism.
- Home care workers are a separated workforce and we often don't know our coworkers or how they're treated.
- So we cannot expect individual caregivers to file complaints with the NV Equal Rights Commission.
- There's also no comprehensive reporting structure to capture the race of workers and clients to safeguard against disparate treatment.
- An industry-wide investigation is needed to understand the systemic forms of discrimination that exist within our unique industry.

Recommendation for Further State Investigation

Through its committee on Systemic Racism and Economic Injustice, the HCESB has heard of numerous experiences of home care workers facing discrimination based on their race. Workers, employers, and consumers have all voiced concerns about differences in pay, opportunities, assignments, hours and treatment. Because of the dispersed nature of the workforce, it is insufficient to rely on individual caregivers filing complaints. An investigation of the industry as a whole is needed in order to develop policy solutions. HCESB recommends that DHHS refer this matter to the appropriate state body and assert that an industry-wide investigation be conducted.