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Duckworth Joins Kaine In Introducing Legislation To Support Direct Care Workforce & Family Caregivers

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WASHINGTON, D.C. — U.S. Senator Tammy Duckworth (D-IL) helped U.S. Senator Tim Kaine (D-VA) introduce the *Supporting Our Direct Care Workforce and Family Caregivers Act* to authorize over \$1 billion in supporting the direct care workforce and family caregivers. Given low wages and high turnover, the direct care workforce has long experienced staffing shortages. Now, with a growing number of older adults and

people with disabilities in the country and following the COVID-19 pandemic, investing in our direct care workforce and family caregivers to support people in their homes and communities is more important than ever before. The bill aligns with President Biden’s American Jobs Plan, which calls for substantial investments to meet the growing demand for home and community-based services.

“Seniors and people with disabilities—who have already been disproportionately impacted by this deadly pandemic—need to know they can rely on direct care workers and family caregivers to help them lead full and independent lives,” said Duckworth. “Those caregivers—largely women and people of color—deserve to be paid fair wages and treated like the essential workers that they are. I’m proud to join my colleagues to help introduce this important bill that would support direct care services.”

“Direct care workers and family caregivers provide critical support to older Americans, people with disabilities, and other individuals with chronic conditions,” said Senator Kaine. “Now more than ever, we must ensure they have the resources they need to continue their important work.”

Currently, 4.5 million workers – including nearly 2.3 million home care workers – make up the direct care workforce, and this industry is expected to [grow by more than a million jobs by 2028](#), not including the jobs that will need to be filled as existing workers leave the field or exit the labor force. Better pay and benefits, strategies to recruit and retain professionals in the field, education and training enhancements and better career advancement opportunities are some of the investments needed to meet the demands of this workforce shortage.

The shortage of direct care workers often puts pressure on family caregivers. The [number of American caregivers](#) providing unpaid caregiving has increased over the past 5 years, and 23% of caregivers say that caregiving has made their health worse.

Specifically, the *Supporting Our Direct Care Workforce and Family Caregivers Act* would:

- Have the Department of Health and Human Services, through the Administration on Community Living (ACL), award grants to states or other eligible entities for initiatives to build, retain, train and otherwise promote the direct care workforce, including self-directed workers and direct care supervisors or managers and to provide grants for states or other eligible entities for educational and training support for both paid and unpaid family caregivers.
- Have the ACL develop a center to offer technical assistance to grant awardees and other entities interested in direct care workforce development and in supporting

family caregivers, aimed at collaboration across federal agencies. The assistance at the center includes:

- Working with states, key stakeholders and other interested entities to establish **career development and advancement strategies** for direct care professionals, which may include occupational frameworks, national standards, recruitment campaigns, pre-apprenticeship and on-the-job training opportunities, apprenticeship programs, career ladders or pathways, specializations or certifications or other activities.
- Exploring the **national data gaps, workforce shortage areas and data collection strategies** for direct care professionals.
- Developing recommendations for **training and education curricula** for direct care professionals and family caregivers.
- Disseminating **information and best practices** from lessons learned through the grants.

The bill text for the *Supporting Our Direct Care Workforce and Family Caregivers Act* is available [here](#).

Along with Duckworth and Kaine, U.S. Senators Bob Casey (D-PA), Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY), Maggie Hassan (D-NH), Jack Reed (D-RI), Jacky Rosen (D-NV) and Ron Wyden (D-OR) are original co-sponsors of the *Supporting Our Direct Care Workforce and Family Caregivers Act*.

This legislation is supported by the American Network of Community Options and Resources (ANCOR), the ARC of the United States, the National Alliance for Direct Support Professionals, Inc. (NADSP), PHI, the National Disability Rights Network (NDRN), the National Domestic Workers Alliance and the Service Employees International Union (SEIU).