

Duckworth, Durbin Join Casey, Dingell In Introducing Bill To Provide Historic, Permanent Investment In Home Care For Seniors

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WASHINGTON D.C. - U.S. Senator Tammy Duckworth (D-IL) and U.S. Senate Majority Whip Dick Durbin (D-IL) joined U.S. Senator Bob Casey (D-PA) and U.S. Representative Debbie Dingell (D-MI-6) in introducing legislation to expand access to

home and community-based services for older adults, people with disabilities and injured workers, while increasing pay and improving benefits for the caregivers who provide this life-sustaining care. The [*Better Care Better Jobs Act*](#) would enhance Medicaid funding for home care, helping many of the over 650,000 people on waiting lists nationally finally receive care in the setting of their choice, allowing them to stay active in their communities and live independently. This legislation would also strengthen the caregiving workforce, improve quality of life for families and boost the economy by creating good-paying jobs to make it possible for families and workers alike to thrive economically.

“The *Better Care Better Jobs Act* would help protect the independence, health and financial stability of seniors and people with disabilities by giving them the option of quality care in the comfort of their homes while also helping build and maintain a strong care workforce,” said Duckworth. “That is why I am so proud to help Senator Casey reintroduce this legislation. The *Better Care Better Jobs Act* carries forward a bold vision to expand access to care, support better pay and benefits for our nation’s hardworking caregivers and create jobs for our economy.”

“Finding home health care for a family member is a deeply personal, and often challenging, experience for Americans. We trust our loved ones to caregivers, and in return, those workers deserve a livable wage and strong benefits. Further, when a family member leaves the workforce to provide care, they can face economic stress,” said Durbin. “By introducing the *Better Care Better Jobs Act*, we are standing up for a better future for those in need of additional in-home support and their caregivers, whether they’re professionals or family members.”

“The United States is in the midst of a caregiving crisis. Across this Nation, seniors and people with disabilities are struggling to find and afford care, forcing families to make difficult decisions like leaving the workforce in order to care for a loved one,” said Casey. “For too long, many families thought this was a personal issue that they had to deal with on their own but now, countless families across the Nation know that they are not alone in this fight and that there is a solution. The *Better Care Better Jobs Act* is a generational investment in home care—it’s about both caring for our loved ones and making the smart economic choice for families and communities across all levels of the government to strengthen this workforce. This is not a Democrat or Republican issue. It’s an American issue.”

“We have a caregiving crisis in this country that has been worsened by the Coronavirus pandemic. More than 50% of Americans 50 or older serve as a caregiver, and family caregivers need relief,” said Dingell. “As many know, this is deeply personal for me – I was lucky to have my husband John receive care at home, which showed me the significant fractures in this system, from low wages for workers to thousands on HCBS

waitlists to so many people not knowing how to get the care they desperately need. Aging Americans and individuals with disabilities overwhelmingly prefer to receive care in the comfort of their homes and within their communities. Better Care Better Jobs moves us closer toward ensuring that no one must wait to get the care they deserve, and no care worker has to live below the poverty line to provide this care. I thank Senator Casey for his continued partnership in this fight.”

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the urgent need to ensure that all Americans have the option to receive quality, long-term care in the setting that meets their needs and preferences and the [vast majority of Americans](#) prefer to receive such care and support at home. While all states provide coverage for *some* home care services, there are significant variations and gaps in coverage due to varying eligibility and benefits standards. The home care workforce—a majority of whom are women and people of color—earn a median wage of [\\$13 per hour](#) with few or no benefits while providing life-sustaining care. Roughly [18 percent](#) of these workers live in poverty. This results in exceptionally high annual turnover rates, estimated to be above 60 percent.

The *Better Care Better Jobs Act* would increase payment rates to promote recruitment and retention of direct care workers, increase wages and develop and update training opportunities. The legislation would provide support to the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services to conduct oversight and encourage innovation to benefit direct care workers and care recipients.

Throughout the pandemic and beyond, Senator Duckworth has been a steady advocate for investments in our nation’s care economy. This past November, she, along with U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky (D-IL-9), [joined a virtual roundtable](#) with Caring Across Generations and a coalition of Illinois care advocates to underscore the urgent need for federal support for the array of care programs and caregivers that provide invaluable support to families across Illinois. Duckworth, an original co-sponsor of the *Better Care Better Jobs Act*, also [participated](#) in a virtual #CareCantWait roundtable with Vice President Kamala Harris, Co-Founder and Executive Director of the National Domestic Workers Alliance Ai-Jen Poo and four Americans with experience in caregiving. Duckworth, Harris and Poo discussed the urgent need to invest in care policies such as the child tax credit, home and community-based services (HCBS), child care and paid family leave. The Senator also authored [a joint op-ed](#) with U.S. Secretary of Commerce Gina Raimondo that highlighted our nation’s caregiving crisis—for both patients and for care workers—and detailed how expanding services and dignity in care work is good for our country.

Along with Duckworth, Durbin and Casey, the Senate cosponsors of the *Better Care Better Jobs Act* are U.S. Senators Ron Wyden (D-OR), Chuck Schumer (D-NY), Patty Murray (D-WA), Sherrod Brown (D-OH), Maggie Hassan (D-NH), Bernie Sanders (I-

VT), Raphael Warnock (D-GA), Jeff Merkley (D-OR), Chris Van Hollen (D-MD), Kristen Gillibrand (D-NY), Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI), Richard Blumenthal (D-CT), John Fetterman (D-PA), Alex Padilla (D-CA), Tim Kaine (D-VA), Tammy Baldwin (D-WI), Tina Smith (D-MN), Ed Markey (D-MA), Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), Jack Reed (D-RI), Elizabeth Warren (D-MA), Debbie Stabenow (D-MI), Maria Cantwell (D-WA), Ben Cardin (D-MD), Cory Booker (D-NJ), Brian Schatz (D-HI), Angus King (I-ME), Martin Heinrich (D-NM), Mazie Hirono (D-HI), Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH), Peter Welch (D-VT), Chris Murphy (D-CT), Bob Menendez (D-NJ), Ben Ray Luján (D-NM) and Dianne Feinstein (D-CA).