



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Statewide Advocate Agencies Address the Fair Wage Crisis for Direct Care Workers

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. – Florida families and providers must be able to recruit and retain dedicated people to work with the variety of care needs of persons with developmental disabilities. Yet, with low wages limiting access to reliable, qualified caregivers, many throughout the state are unable to obtain the direct care services they need.

Strengthening direct care staff and supporting a fair wage are vital for individuals to live meaningful lives, say advocates. They contend that, in many cases, the current path is creating a harmful cycle for individuals, families and care staff. As turnover rates increase and the number of direct care workers within the system decreases, individuals are not properly cared for and are often left to fend for themselves.

“If we cannot maintain this workforce on the frontlines, the rest of the system doesn’t really matter,” said Deborah Linton, CEO for Arc of Florida. “What the state does, what social workers do – that’s secondary. It’s the frontline staff that’s most important and that’s who we’ve got to get these provider rate increases for.”

To shed light on the importance of direct care services and support for a fair wage, Florida Developmental Disabilities Council (FDDC), Arc of Florida and Florida Association of Rehabilitation Facilities (Florida ARF) have launched *Pay Fair for Care*.

The statewide initiative is urging the Florida Legislature to provide funding for the payment of fair wages and help to ensure providers and families have access to dedicated and reliable direct care workers.

“Direct care workers are earning on average \$8.50 to \$9 an hour. They could go to a fast food restaurant and earn \$10 an hour. How are families supposed to deal with caregivers who are constantly coming and going? This is a crisis,” said Suzanne Sewell, President and CEO of Florida ARF.

FDDC and its partners have developed a short video with messages from family members and providers, post cards and a one-page info-graphic addressing the key issues. All materials are located online and can be accessed through the Pay Fair for Care icon at fddc.org.

“Our Pay Fair for Care initiative raises awareness about the critical role direct care workers have in the lives of people with unique abilities and their families “said Valerie Breen, Executive Director for the Florida Developmental Disabilities Council. “The ability to recruit and retain direct care assistance so individuals with disabilities and their families can remain employed and be contributing citizens is essential for anyone to survive and thrive”.

About FDDC

FDDC is a nonprofit organization that guides the development and administration of services for people with developmental disabilities by planning and funding research, innovations, and programs designed to improve the quality of their lives. The Council engages in state and national advocacy in support of legislation and programs responsive to the needs of people with developmental disabilities. To learn more, visit fddc.org.