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Visiting Nurse Agency Urges Support for Representative Aaron Vega’s “Enough Pay To Stay” Amendment

Picture a widowed woman in her mid-80s. She needs help daily with bathing, dressing and toileting. But she has one more problem: she has been told that there are no workers available to come into her home to fill all the hours of care she needs.

This scenario is happening more and more across the Commonwealth and right here in greater Attleboro. The recruitment and retention of home care aides and home health aides poses a real threat to the independence of many of our older neighbors. The image of a low-wage/high-turnover job makes it hard to find and keep home care workers. The fact is that we must do better if we are to keep up with our fastest growing demographic—those over the age of 60. We must give these essential home care workers "enough pay to stay."
Representative Aaron Vega (D-Holyoke) has filed an important elder home care workforce amendment to the House of Representatives’ budget that will soon be up for floor debate in the House. Rep. Vega’s amendment was supported by a workforce coalition of three major elder groups in the state: Mass Home Care, the Home Care Aide Council of Massachusetts, and the Home Care Alliance. The amendment would provide immediate rate relief to support the wages and benefits earned by the following frontline home care workers: Homemakers/Personal Care Homemakers (wage and benefit increase of $1.43 per hour) and Home Health Aides (wage and benefit increase of $.72 per hour).

Long term services and supports providers, such as Community VNA, are facing unprecedented challenges to recruit and retain the highly trained workforce needed to provide quality care to clients in the community. Homemakers and Home Health Aides are among the lowest paid workers in Massachusetts. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the average hourly wage for a Homemaker is $13.05 and the average wage for a Home Health Aide is $13.78 an hour.

Massachusetts has a proud tradition of committing to community based care and that commitment is both good social policy, and sound fiscal policy. Working with the home care community has resulted in a 37% drop in the number of nursing home patient days paid for by the state Medicaid program between FY 2000 and FY 2016.

While these efforts to “rebalance” where citizens receive long term care have been successful, they have not been met with the necessary reinvestments in the community workforce. The Vega amendment is a needed step to reinvest some of those savings in the workforce who are making it possible to stay home with help.
Press Release

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About Community VNA
Community VNA has been dedicated to enhancing health, wellness and quality of life for more than 100 years, providing a range of services, including: Home Health Care, Hospice Care, Palliative Care, Private Care, Adult Day Health Care, Alzheimer’s Assistance Program, as well as Lifeline services and annual Elder Dental Clinics.

Community VNA has been awarded 2016 Home Care Elite Status (ranked among the top 25% of home health care agencies nationwide) marking the sixth year of this recognition. This recognition is based on publicly available performance measures in quality outcomes, best practice implementing patient experience, quality improvement and consistency, and financial performance.

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