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### **PHI Launches Joint Advocacy Initiative on Direct Care Workers in New Jersey with New Jersey Advocates for Aging Well**

NEW YORK (March 1, 2022) — [PHI](#) announced a partnership today with [New Jersey Advocates for Aging Well](#)—a statewide organization focused solely on providing leadership in public policy and education to support New Jersey's older adults—to co-lead a multi-year policy advocacy effort focused on strengthening the state's direct care workforce.

This partnership is part of PHI's Essential Jobs, Essential Care™ multi-state advocacy initiative, [which launched in 2020](#) and currently includes Michigan, New Mexico, New York, and North Carolina. New Jersey becomes the fifth state to join this initiative.

"This partnership and focus on the direct care workforce will be a key component of the age-friendly efforts throughout New Jersey," said Cathy Rowe, DrPH, Executive Director at New Jersey Advocates for Aging Well.

"We must prepare not only for an aging population, but for the workforce needed to help our state's residents age with dignity and independence," added Rowe.

"We're thrilled to be partnering with New Jersey Advocates for Aging Well to help transform New Jersey's direct care jobs and build on our history of successes in the state," said Jodi M. Sturgeon, President at PHI.

"As the COVID-19 pandemic has made even more clear, direct care workers throughout New Jersey deserve the support and recognition for their essential work," added Sturgeon.

Although more than 101,000 direct care workers in New Jersey provide critical support to older adults and people with disabilities across the state, their jobs are often characterized by inadequate compensation, limited training and advancement opportunities, and other challenges related to poor

job quality. As a result, nearly 40 percent of the state’s direct care workers live in or near poverty, and 41 percent access some form of public assistance.

These challenges also push direct care workers away from this sector, making it more difficult for providers to meet current and growing demand. In this context, PHI estimates that long-term care employers in New Jersey will need to fill nearly 179,000 job openings in direct care from 2018 to 2028, which includes new jobs to meet growing demand and jobs that must be filled when existing workers transfer to other occupations or exit the labor force.

This joint advocacy initiative will convene diverse stakeholders from across New Jersey to identify and advocate for a range of policy solutions that address these and other challenges.

### **ABOUT ESSENTIAL JOBS, ESSENTIAL CARE NEW JERSEY**

Through Essential Jobs, Essential Care New Jersey, PHI and New Jersey Advocates for Aging Well will convene a steering committee and a diverse coalition of state and local leaders and advocates from various sectors to advance policy reforms on this workforce.

In other Essential Jobs, Essential Care initiative states, PHI and its coalition partners have successfully brought together a range of leaders and advocates to discuss pressing issues, find commonalities, create advocacy road maps with concrete policy goals and activities, achieve policy wins in the short term, and build advocacy capacity.

An upcoming progress report from PHI details the Essential Jobs, Essential Care initiative’s remarkable successes.

In November 2020, drawing on several years of policy and practice work in New Jersey, [PHI issued a policy report](#) on the state’s direct care workforce and [held a virtual discussion](#) with key leaders to discuss the report’s findings. The discussion’s participants overwhelmingly agreed that creating a multi-year, joint advocacy initiative in the state was the most critical next step.

New Jersey has also made progress toward improving direct care jobs in recent years.

For example, in July 2021, New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy earmarked \$240 million to wage increases for direct support professionals, certified nurse aides, personal care assistants, Medicaid transportation providers, and childcare workers.

In addition, early this year, Gov. Murphy signed into law a bill that dedicates \$1 million to creating pipeline and career advancement opportunities for direct support professionals, a segment of the direct care workforce that supports people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Despite these early wins, more policy advancements will be needed to strengthen and stabilize New Jersey’s direct care workforce.

“New Jersey has made remarkable policy progress on the direct care workforce in the last few years, and we’re excited to work with New Jersey Advocates for Aging Well and other leaders statewide to help create a new reality for this essential yet undervalued workforce,” said Hannah Diamond, State Policy Advocacy Specialist at PHI and the organization’s staff lead for Essential Jobs, Essential Care New Jersey.

*This initiative in New Jersey is generously funded by the Henry and Marilyn Taub Foundation.*

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### **About NJAAW**

*NJ Advocates for Aging Well (NJAAW, [njaaw.org](http://njaaw.org)) has been at the forefront of revolutionizing the aging experience since 1998. It is the only statewide nonprofit focused solely on providing leadership in public policy and education to enable older adults to live with independence and dignity in their communities. NJAAW's social action issues include senior housing and hunger, elder economic security, older workers and transportation. Aging Insights, a monthly topical TV program produced by NJAAW, connects caregivers, older adults and their families to community-based services and resources. The show is available on NJAAW's [YouTube channel](https://www.youtube.com/njadvocatesforagingwell) at youtube.com/njadvocatesforagingwell and [website](#), as well as public-access stations across NJ (check local listings for channels and times). NJAAW also presents educational forums and an Annual Conference (June 13, 2022) offering development opportunities and best practices for professionals entrusted with caring for aging adults. Follow NJAAW on Facebook and Instagram @njadvocatesforagingwell and Twitter @njagingwell.*