

-MEMORANDUM-

To: Gary Massey, Chair, North Carolina Medical Care Advisory Committee
From: Ted Goins for the NC Direct Care Workforce Crisis Work Group
Date: March 15, 2021
Subject: Direct Care Workforce Update for the MCAC

Thank you for allowing the NC Direct Care Workforce Crisis Work Group to continue to work through the Medical Care Advisory Committee on one of the issues that has the most impact on access and quality of care for Medicaid recipients, sufficient and high-quality direct care workers.

You will recall the Work Group is an unofficial team of interested parties and individuals who have been working on this issue since 2018. The group includes people from government, academia, consumer advocates, providers, and others, and has been a center for information sharing, advocacy, idea generation, and support.

The Work Group meets approximately every two months, with the most recent meeting being on February 8, 2021. Please allow me to share a couple of exciting topics from the group.

Many of the organizations involved in the Work Group and others are beginning to coalesce around supporting state legislation to pay a living wage to the state's health and human services direct care workers, and with the reimbursement to cover the cost. Discussion continues on whether to peg that at the \$15 per hour rate the state set in 2018 for state health and human services workers. The MCAC will have the opportunity to discuss and, hopefully, support that proposed legislation as it develops.

FutureCare NC just signed a contract with the State of North Carolina on March 1, 2021 for a \$2.7 million civil money penalty Caregivers NC Workforce grant. The grant objective is to recruit 4,000 new CNAs into NC's nursing homes. A similar program was highly successful in Wisconsin, and FutureCare NC has already begun to implement the grant program.

The N.C. Coalition on Aging is leading the N.C. component of the three-state study for PHI to improve jobs for direct care workers in three states: Michigan, New Mexico, and North Carolina. The NC effort kicked off with a two-day virtual conference entitled Essential Jobs, Essential Care on February 11 and 12, 2021. It was well attended and well done, and almost the entire Work Group participated.

The Work Group discussed at length the direct care workforce crisis, even further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. The State of North Carolina has been extremely supportive of Medicaid recipients and their providers during the pandemic. Continued regulatory and reimbursement support will be essential as Medicaid recipients and their providers attempt to emerge from the pandemic and into a new reality.

Thank you for the opportunity to share, as always. Please contact me at tgoins@LSCarolinas.net if you have any questions or if we can further assist in any way.