

PHI commends the Senate HELP Committee on the release of its draft bill, the *Affordable Health Choices Act*. The bill represents a major step toward ensuring affordable, accessible, comprehensive health coverage for all Americans. As an organization dedicated to our nation's three million direct-care workers and the millions of elders and people with disabilities they serve, PHI makes the following recommendations for improving and strengthening the bill:

- **Include “Direct Care Workers” in new definitions being added to Title VII of the Public Health Services act and to definitions of the Health Care Workforce.**
This will ensure full recognition of this workforce which is vital to the delivery of long-term services and supports and a valuable asset in managing and preventing chronic disease, promoting health, and controlling health care costs.
- **Include a review of training standards for Direct Care Workers and provide support for needed upgrades.**
There are no federal training standards for Personal Care Aides (PCAs) and the federal requirements for Certified Nurse Aides and Home Health Aides have not been revised in over twenty years. Direct care worker competencies and corresponding training standards should be reviewed to ensure that they support the delivery of quality, person-centered services. Grant funds to states for piloting and evaluating PCA competencies and training curricula are a critical first step in articulating a training system for these workers who now constitute the second fastest growing occupation in the country.
- **Provide grants to support the recruitment and retention of the direct care workforce.**
Providing grant funds to states to evaluate methods for recruiting and retaining an adequate supply of direct care workers is imperative to meeting the current and growing demand for long term services and supports, and supporting the efficient delivery of health services.
- **Recognize the direct care workforce as part of the community health workforce.**
Given their daily interaction with millions of Americans with chronic illnesses and disabilities, direct care workers are ideally positioned to promote health and nutrition in the community. Include them in efforts and initiatives to promote the engagement of the community health workforce in providing these functions.
- **Fund grants to promote the Community Living Assistance Services and Supports (CLASS) Workforce.**
The CLASS provisions provide critical financial support to enable individuals with chronic illnesses or disabilities to live independently in their communities. States need support to ensure sufficient workforce capacity to meet this goal.

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