



# OUR CARE CAN'T WAIT

## Advocacy Toolkit

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## About the Our Care Can't Wait Coalition

The Our Can't Wait is a coalition of people with disabilities, families, disability advocacy organizations and Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) provider agencies working to ensure people with disabilities and families have a well-qualified, reliable workforce that meets their needs to live the life they choose.

During the 2023 legislative session The Office of Performance Evaluation (OPE) released its [“Sustainability of Idaho’s Direct Care Workforce”](#) report. The report outlined five recommendations to address the direct care workforce crisis.

The Our Can't Wait Coalition is working to educate and inform legislators of these recommendations and to put Idaho on the path of creating a sustainable direct care workforce.

## About this Toolkit

Use this toolkit to write a letter to your legislators or schedule a meeting—even ideas for social media.

The Our Care Can't Wait Toolkit features detailed steps, materials, and tips to help advocates create talking points and communicate with their state legislators.

This toolkit will help you prepare to meet with your legislators and talk about how the direct care workforce shortage impacts your life. You will find information to better understand policy issues, tools to help you share your lived experience, and ideas to post on social media to raise awareness.

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## Who's my Legislator?

Visit the Idaho Legislative website. Enter your address to find out what district you live in and find your legislator's contact information.

<https://legislature.idaho.gov/legislators/whosmylegislator/>

## Important Committees

You may also want to contact members of the Health and Welfare (H&W) Committee and the Joint Finance and Appropriations Committee (JFAC). During committee meetings they hold hearings. Hearings are where they learn about an issue and make decisions about those issues. JFAC decides how much state agencies can spend.

Click on the "Members" tab for contact information.

[House H&W Committee](#)

[Senate H&W Committee](#)

[JFAC Committee](#)

## Set up a Meeting with Your Legislator

When making an appointment, include who you are, where you live, and what you would like to talk to them about.

### Sample Script

What you might say on the phone or write in an email:

Dear Senator (or Representative) \_\_\_\_\_,

My name is \_\_\_\_\_. I am a parent/self-advocate/other, and I live in \_\_\_\_\_ (city/town). I am very concerned about/would like to talk to you about \_\_\_\_\_ (topic/topics you choose).

I would like to set up a meeting or phone call with you on **ENTER DATE**.

Would you have some time between **ENTER TIME** to talk with me?

Thank you and I look forward to meeting with you on \_\_\_\_ (date/time).

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## Meeting Tips

- How to plan for a visit with a legislator when your meeting is scheduled
  - Send a reminder about the appointment – call, email, or text, if you have their cell phone number, the day before the meeting
  - Write out and practice your message/talking points
  - Make a plan for parking and finding offices
  - Document your meeting – write down what happened in your meeting
    - Ask to take a picture with your legislator
    - Make notes of information from the legislator, important things they say
    - Write down questions the legislator may have
  - Follow up
    - Send a thank you message – email, text, or send a note
    - Invite to upcoming events
    - Tag them in social media
- What to do if a legislator asks something you don't know

You are the expert on your life and the services that support you. You are not expected to be an expert on everything that may come up

- Tell them you don't know but will find out and follow up with them
- Follow up – fulfill any promises to get information or connect your legislator to someone with the information

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## Develop your Message

### TALKING POINTS OUTLINE

#### 1. Thank you

- Thank them for meeting with you
- Introduce who you are and your role (a person who uses Home and Community Based Services (HCBS), a family member of an adult who uses HCBS, a family member or parent of a minor child who uses HCBS)

#### 2. Issue

- Why do **you** care so much about the Direct Care Provider shortage that you are willing to do something about it?

#### 3. Why it matters to Everyone

- Describe the problem

#### 4. What my life is like because of the staff shortages

- Give real life examples that you or your loved one have experienced
- What isn't working

#### 5. What my life is like when staff is available

- Give real life examples of what your life looks like when you have the staff you need
- What are some ways to fix the problem?

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## 6. What is your reaction to my story

- Do you see this as an issue? How have you seen it in your district?  
I hope you can agree there is a problem with...

## 7. What I want you to do

- I am asking for your help to prioritize the direct care shortage. Increasing wages is the first step to help us solve the direct care workforce crisis. It is also important that direct care workers are well trained and have ongoing training.
- Please read the report “Sustainability of Idaho’s Direct Care Workforce” from the Office of Performance Evaluation.  
<https://legislature.idaho.gov/ope/reports/r2202/>

## 8. Thank you

- Say thank you
- Offer to connect them to people who can give them more information about this issue
- Offer to be a resource to them for disability issues that they need input on

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## Example Letter/Emails

### Example 1: SAMPLE ONLY – please do not use as your letter

Thank you for meeting with me.

My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I live in \_\_\_\_\_.

I (my son or daughter, mother or father) receive services paid for through Medicaid's Home and Community Based Services. These services support me (her, him, or them) with \_\_\_\_\_ (it is important to be very specific about the kind of support you need to live your life such as: they help me take my medication, they help me get in and out of bed, they help me keep my catheter clean, they help my child learn ways to manage their anxiety, they help my child socialize with other children, they help me do my grocery shopping, they help me make my meals, they help me take a bath, they help me use the toilet, etc. Don't use jargon or acronyms)

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All these services, called Home and Community Based Services are provided by direct care workers paid for by Medicaid. Home and Community Based Services are the most cost-effective way to support people with disabilities and seniors, and help people avoid unwanted institutional living.

You may have heard about the crisis happening all over Idaho for people with disabilities, seniors, and families because there is a huge shortage of direct care workers.

I would like to tell you how the direct care workforce shortage has impacted me or my family member.



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## **Example 2: SAMPLE ONLY – please do not use as your letter**

Thank you for meeting with me.

My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I live in \_\_\_\_\_.

There have been at least 10 times over the past year staff has not been available to provide in- home support for me. I need help getting in and out of bed, help preparing my meals, help to bathe, dress, and use the toilet. I can't do these things without physical support. Because staff have been unavailable, I have slept in my wheelchair overnight too many times to count. When this happens, I can't use the toilet or get to water or food. Because I am unable to reposition myself in my wheelchair, I am left in one position for hours. When that happens, I'll very likely develop pressure sores. I will probably have to go to the hospital and fight off an infection because of the pressure sores that could kill me. Hospitalization costs more than if I were to have services provided in my own home.

I am asking for your help to prioritize the direct care shortage. Increasing wages is the first step to help us solve the direct care workforce crisis. It is also important that direct care workers are well trained and have ongoing training.

Please read the Sustainability of Idaho's Direct Care Workforce that the Office of Performance Evaluation completed in 2023.

<https://legislature.idaho.gov/ope/reports/r2202/>

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## **Example 3: SAMPLE ONLY – please do not use as your letter**

Thank you for meeting with me.

My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I live in \_\_\_\_\_.

I need help getting from my apartment to the community to do my grocery shopping, get money from the bank and visit my family and friends. This means I need help to schedule my appointments, get transportation set up, and make sure my staff can assist me while I'm doing these things because of my seizures. I am unable to do these things without the assistance of staff. Because staff are often unavailable, I have missed medical appointments and have not been able to pick up my prescriptions. I have run out of food because I haven't been able to get to the store. I cannot afford a delivery service. I cannot see my friends and family as often as I want because I do not have the staff support. I have to prioritize my medical, pharmacy and grocery store needs, so even when I have staff, I am not able to do much that is fun. I am lonely and afraid for my future if this keeps up.

I am asking for your help to prioritize the direct care shortage. Increasing wages is the first step to help us solve the direct care workforce crisis. It is also important that direct care workers are well trained and have ongoing training.

Please read the Sustainability of Idaho's Direct Care Workforce that the Office of Performance Evaluation completed in 2023.

<https://legislature.idaho.gov/ope/reports/r2202/>

# OUR CARE CAN'T WAIT

## **Example 4: SAMPLE ONLY – please do not use as your letter**

Thank you for meeting with me.

My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I live in \_\_\_\_\_.

I am the parent of an adult son with a developmental disability. I have had to cut the hours I can work at my job to provide support to my son. He cannot be left alone due to safety reasons. He needs help with bathing, dressing, eating, and support walking. Because of the direct care workforce shortage there is not staff available to provide this level of support for the past three years. Because I have had to work less outside of the home my family has lost \$30,000 a year in our household income. My son also does not want to spend all of his time with his mother and misses the time he had to socialize with other people his own age. I am not able to do all of the things the direct care workers were able to support him to do because of all of the other responsibilities I have with my other children.

I am asking for your help to prioritize the direct care shortage. Increasing wages is the first step to help us solve the direct care workforce crisis. It is also important that direct care workers are well trained and have ongoing training.

Please read the Sustainability of Idaho's Direct Care Workforce that the Office of Performance Evaluation completed in 2023.

<https://legislature.idaho.gov/ope/reports/r2202/>

# OUR CARE CAN'T WAIT

## **Example 5: SAMPLE ONLY – please do not use as your letter**

Thank you for meeting with me.

My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I live in \_\_\_\_\_.

My mom gets help from Medicaid to live at home. She had a stroke and went to a nursing home until she was released back to her home. When she was first released, she had helpers to take her shopping, help her get up and dress, help her get around, help her get around, and help her fix meals and remember to take her medications. I help as much as I can. We live about ten miles from her, and I check on her every day. I also work full time and have my own family including three kids under the age of 14. Mom was doing pretty well until her workers started not showing up. I had to take time from work to call the agency and try to find help for her. When the agency could no longer find workers, my mom lost her Medicaid home support workers. I set timers to call her and remind her to take her many medicines. She doesn't always answer the phone because she can't hear very well. She can't use an answering machine or smart phone. There is no one who can help her get dressed in the morning. Often when I stop by after work, she is still in bed and very sad. I do her shopping and pick up her medicines. She is frustrated that she can't get out and do things herself with her workers anymore. She is not doing well. We don't have a big enough house to move her in with us. I'm worried she will fall or have another stroke because she misses her medicines. I'm worried she'll end up stuck in a nursing home or worse – all because she doesn't have helpers anymore.

I'm asking that you care about my mom and other people who are having the same problems. Please help Medicaid get enough money to pay these valuable workers who help seniors stay in their own homes and the towns that they love. Direct care workers need higher wages so they can afford to keep helping people like my mom. Direct care workers also need good training, so they know how to help people stay safe and happy.

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Please read the Sustainability of Idaho's Direct Care Workforce that the Office of Performance Evaluation completed in 2023.

<https://legislature.idaho.gov/ope/reports/r2202/>

# OUR CARE CAN'T WAIT

## Resources about the Direct Care Workforce Shortage Issue

- Office of Performance Evaluations

“Sustainability of Idaho’s Direct Care Workforce” report

<https://legislature.idaho.gov/ope/reports/r2202/>

- Our Care Can’t Wait Factsheets

[Our Care Can’t Wait](#)

[Who are Home and Community-Based Service Direct Care Workers?](#)

[OPE Recommendations](#)

[Idaho Map of Medicaid Home and Community-Based Services](#)

- Video on Home and Community Based Services

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e0WDoiRidUU>

- Our Care Can’t Wait website

<https://icdd.idaho.gov/community-now/our-care-cant-wait/>

# OUR CARE CAN'T WAIT

## Letter Writing Campaign

Between Monday, January 27 – Friday, January 31<sup>st</sup> we are asking advocates to send a letter to their legislators and certain committee members (please see links below). Let's fill their mailboxes with messages from the Disability community!

- Share the importance of direct care workers in your day
- Why livable wages and training are so important for direct care workers and people with disabilities and seniors
- Understand the Office of Performance Evaluation recommendations and work towards implementing them

Invite your legislators to meet you during Fred Riggers Disability Advocacy Day on Wednesday, February 5, 2025, from 10:00am – 1:00pm, First Floor Capitol Rotunda

## Important Committees

Click on the “Members” tab for contact information.

[House H&W Committee](#)

[Senate H&W Committee](#)

[JFAC Committee](#)

**If you need letterhead, envelopes, stamps or help with who to write letters to please call The Idaho Council on Developmental Disabilities 208-334-2178.**

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## Social Media

Join the Our Care Can't Wait to help raise awareness of the direct care workforce shortage and advocate for workers, people with disabilities, seniors, and families.

Explore the digital toolkit and resources below to learn more.

**Hashtags:** #OurCareCantWait, #DirectCareWorker

## Share on Social Media

Throughout January and February, we invite you to share your story and how your care community supports you with us on social media. Please use the hashtags #OurCareCantWait in your posts.

To help you get started, we have provided sample posts and graphics below that you can use on social media.

### Step 1

Download or create your own graphic

### Step 2

Copy a message or create your own

### Step 3

Login into your social media account and post

## Sample Captions

- My life, my support! My direct care worker supports me to \_\_\_\_\_  
#OurCareCantWait #DirectCareWorker



# OUR CARE CAN'T WAIT

- “To direct care workers: We appreciate you! #OurCareCantWait #DirectCareWorker
- “Direct Care Workers are the backbone and heart of our Home and Community Based Services”. Tag your direct care worker to show your appreciation!

## Sample Graphics

Our Care Can't Wait Logo

# OUR CARE CAN'T WAIT

## Facebook Posts



# OUR CARE CAN'T WAIT

## #OurCareCantWait

Direct care workers (DCWs) are essential for people with disabilities and seniors because they provide the hands-on support for people to live at home and avoid costly institutional services



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**The role of a direct care worker (DCW) goes beyond caregiving and focuses more broadly on supporting people with disabilities and seniors to participate fully in their communities, live in integrated settings, and seek competitive integrated employment**

**#OurCareCantWait**



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