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Letters to the Editor

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State must adjust direct care workers' salary

It is impossible to put a price tag on how much it is worth to provide support, training and life savings skills to New York's most vulnerable citizens. Yet that is what individuals who work in the human service sector do 24 hours a day, 365 days of the year.

We are fortunate in New York to have an extraordinary network of human service agencies that reach every corner of the state and provide services to hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers with social, emotional, addiction and social service needs. New York's human services nonprofit sector employs 200,000 workers who build and maintain the well-being of New Yorkers every day.

These skilled professionals provide the services and leadership required for communities to benefit from programs and services like universal prekindergarten, mental health care, employment training and intergenerational community centers. The network serves very young children to our state's oldest adults.

Despite the human and economic impact of the service delivery sector, our workforce and providers are facing an unprecedented crisis. The crisis wreaks havoc within human services and impacts the quality of life for every New Yorker - regardless of economic status or location.

For providers, the average turnover rate for direct care staff, clinicians and support personnel exceeds 30 percent. Nationally, the rate is as high as 50 percent in some sectors.

High turnover results in increased overtime costs, increased stress and burnout, safety risks, increased training costs and, sadly, poor quality of service. Imagine you or a loved one with significant support need having a different staff every six months or, worse yet, every month.

This has to change.

We ask that the state provide salary adjustments for those not covered by the prior year state budget for direct care workers. Nonprofits cannot continue to subsidize the state. The time to act is now—it cannot wait.

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