

**Delaware General Assembly**

**State of Delaware**

**For Immediate Release:**

**May 25, 2022**

**Budget-Writing Committee Increases Funding for Direct**

**Support Professionals**

*Increased funds for those serving adults with disabilities fulfills Michael McNesby Act*

DOVER – The Joint Finance Committee has approved funding to increase the reimbursement rates for direct support professionals serving adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

The legislative budget-writing committee, a 12-member panel of representatives and senators from both parties charged with drafting the state’s operating budget, approved a $16.5 million increase to fulfill the promise of phased-in progress toward funding benchmarks established in the [Michael McNesby Act](https://legis.delaware.gov/BillDetail/26684), a 2018 law that required the state to increase the rates paid to direct support professionals to improve recruitment and retention of these positions.

“Direct support professionals provide vital services to Delawareans with intellectual and developmental disabilities. It’s a very demanding and challenging – and rewarding – job, but this field historically has been underfunded, leading to staffing shortages, which means residents aren’t getting the care they need,” said **Rep. Ed Osienski**, a lead sponsor of the original McNesby Act and a friend of the McNesby family. “The Joint Finance Committee’s decision to approve this funding is a fulfillment of our commitment to these dedicated professionals and sends a message that we value them and the services they provide. I’m grateful to the committee’s decision, and I look forward to voting on the full budget next month.”

Increasing state funding by $16.5 million would result in the federal government providing an additional $27.5 million in matching funds, which would fund disability services to 100% of the benchmarks set in a 2019 rate rebasing study required by the McNesby Act.

“Direct support professionals have served people with disabilities and other challenges with dedication and distinction throughout the pandemic, often putting the health of their clients before their own,” said **Sen. Laura Sturgeon**, a member of JFC and winner of the Ability Network’s 2022 Legislative Friend of the Year Award. “My colleagues and I have been fighting for years to increase the rates paid to service providers to the benchmark. I want to thank my fellow members of the Joint Finance Committee for standing up for these dedicated and essential professionals today and voting to fund their critical work.”

If approved, this would follow a $17.2 million increase in reimbursement rates for direct support professionals in the current fiscal 2022 operating budget.

The vote to approve the funding increase took place during markup, a period when the committee takes the governor’s recommended budget and begins voting on specific funding requests, essentially writing the budget.

The vote also follows last week’s passage of Senate Concurrent Resolution 103, sponsored by **Sen. Jack Walsh, Senate Majority Leader Bryan Townsend** and **Delaware Legislative Black Caucus Chair Rep. Kendra Johnson**.

The Joint Finance Committee will continue reviewing and voting on funding priorities for the fiscal 2023 operating budget this week. Once completed, legislative budget staff will write the final budget bill, which must be approved by the entire General Assembly.

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