



Let me begin by thanking you for the recent increase in pay for personal care attendants. That was a good start, but that is only one step in fixing the caregiving crisis in Kansas. My name is Askia Adams, I am 44, have Cerebral Palsy, and am facing a crisis within the next month. I have spoken to you about my struggle to find and keep caregivers before, but now things are at the crisis point. One of my workers has told me she will be leaving by the middle of May. This is troubling, because I need total care. The lack of caregivers makes living independently a challenge for me.

In the past four months I have been attempting to find a new caregiver, however it is challenging to find workers when a person can make more flipping burgers than caring for me. I know this has been an issue for the legislature, but I would like to remind you the average fast-food worker is making \$12.09

an hour while my personal care attendant is making \$10.90 an hour I cannot compete. These numbers come from indeed.com [https://www.indeed.com/career/fast-food-attendant/salaries/Kansas-City--](https://www.indeed.com/career/fast-food-attendant/salaries/Kansas-City--KS?aceid=&kw=adwords_c_9099621460_15516767951_&sid=us_googconthajpmax-_c_g_9023887&gclid=CjwKCAjwo8-SBhAlEiwAopc9W2Z33IDZkKq5d9E7geowxb78pVexTfn1wE2uYWBm4CPTGQyQquOoXhoCsGsQAvD_BwE)

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This crisis could have serious consequences for me if I do not find a caregiver by the middle of May Without a caregiver I will be stranded. I need help with basic activities, and right now I have no one to replace my caregiver. How am I supposed to get dress without a caregiver? Who is going to help me use the restroom? How am I supposed to eat without assistance? And who will help me take my medicine? These will become real concerns for me once my caregiver leaves if I have not found someone new by then.

The raise helped some caregivers, but what about those workers who do over forty hours a week? The pca who is leaving works weekends, and typically works every Thursday and every Friday in addition to every other Saturday and Sunday. This worker is having her hourly pay cut, because she we works overtime. The way our current system is designed in order to keep me within my budget my financial management service, the company who pays my staff, tells me they have to reduce the pay of any worker who does over forty hours. Do you really expect me to find someone to replace her when an applicant finds out if they work overtime their pay will decrease instead of increase? This is my life the state is playing around with. Crazy rules like these are what prevent me from finding workers. I ask again do you want me living in the community or in an institution. If you want me living on my own the state needs to quit putting obstacles like these in my way.

We can start removing these barriers by; changing the rules around overtime, insuring the recent raise goes directly to workers, and providing medical benefits. Yes, these recommendations are focused on the needs of caregivers. Guess what. If my staff is concerned about these things they are going to find a job which gives them this type of security. Some of my workers have said they had to leave, because they needed health insurance. How can we expect workers to work overtime then turn around and reduce their pay to stay within a person's budget? That is what our current system does. By putting challenges like these in the way of caregivers the state makes finding help very difficult.

Wages for Direct Care Workers are low across the country, but they have been especially low in Kansas. Median hourly wage for this workforce nationally was \$13.56 in 2020, but the median annual earnings in Kansas for the same year were \$23,520, which is about \$11.75 per hour.

Kansas' wages for direct service workers have historically been lower than the U.S. average and peers. The median wage for Missouri in 2020 was more than a dollar higher, and in Iowa, it was more than two dollars an hour higher. Last year, Missouri significantly raised their rates, and their legislature plans to do more funding increases in the future.

Scarcity of workers is a constant concern for people who need services. Kansas has half (1/2) the U.S. average of home health and personal care workers per HCBS participant compared to the national average. There is less than one worker (.09) per participant in Kansas. For comparison, the state of Missouri maintains 2.2 workers for every person who receives services.

Kansas has historically had high turnover rates. If we were to decrease turnover rates, it would help reduce retention costs, save the state money, and build capacity. According to a recent study on benchmarking for Home Care services, an increase in hourly wages from \$11 an hour to \$14 an hour reduces staff turnoff rates by 25%.

There are thousands of Kansans with disabilities who have similar stories to mine. We want to live as independent as possible and part of what enables us to live independently is having care attendants to help us with daily activities like personal care. We have the right to live in our own homes in the community. When we have difficulty finding caregivers it is like telling us we should either move back home with our families or go back into an institution. Is that really the message we want to send our fellow Kansans who have disabilities? I do not think so. We as Kansans are better than this. Our state claims to support its citizens. Now is the time to put our money where our mouth is, and quit forcing Direct Support Workers (D.S.W'S) to barely survive. Helping our caregivers helps Kansas citizens with disabilities. When our workers have financial security they are more likely to remain with us. When workers stay with their clients the clients' quality of life improve. This is truly a win for the state; first when individuals are served in their community it is more cost effective, and second individuals are able to contribute to their community. It just makes sense to compensate my staff fairly if you want me living in my community.