



A Green New Deal *for* Home Care in New York State

The work of caring for each other is the most important labor in our society. That has always been true. But the coronavirus is magnifying everything that has always been true. In this moment, we've all come to see that care work is a matter of life and death.

Care work is essential work. It also happens to be climate work.

Every time disaster strikes, care workers - those who work in homes and those who work in institutions — are on the frontlines, saving lives, just as they have been during this pandemic. And, care jobs are green, sustainable, and generative jobs that are part of a future and a Green New Deal that prioritizes people and our planet, not billionaires and corporations.

The New York Caring Majority is organizing to build this future. We call ourselves the **New York Caring Majority** because all of us, in some way, are connected by care and caregiving. We are the people who are most likely to die from this virus, as well as from economic crises and climate crises. And we are the people who rise to provide care and save lives. **And we've had it with this threadbare system** that has never met our needs. **So many thousands of people (the majority of them people of color), have died of COVID, afraid and alone, because politicians and CEOs continue to choose their greed and profit over our care.**

Racial justice must be at the core of our drive to transform society. The Green New Deal aims to build a safer, fairer society, and that means dismantling systemic racism and inequality. When domestic and agricultural workers were excluded from key parts of the original New Deal, it was a strategy to exclude Black people -- in particular, the Black women who did and still do so much crucial care work. This time, we must do the opposite, and put care work, racial justice, and feminism at the center of a new economy.

In this time of acute, overlapping crises, more and more people are waking up to the need for transformative solutions. Let's seize the moment together.

We are building a movement to ensure that the Caring Majority is at the center of local, state, and federal response to the coronavirus pandemic. We know that the care sector and care work can be the answers to re-starting our economy in a way that protects and supports ALL of US. On the other side of COVID-19, we will create a world in which all of us have the care and support we need to live full, healthy lives in our communities. In our vision, the work of providing care will be a respected and recognized contribution to our communities and our society. It will be a dignified and well paid job within a fast-growing and flourishing sector of a sustainable, humane economy.

In our vision, all of us are essential. Nobody is disposable.



NY CARING
MAJORITY

Our Agenda for New York

Healthcare for All with Long-Term Care included from Day One

- Pass the New York Health Act, our nation's most comprehensive, inclusive, and feminist single-payer bill. In the midst of COVID-19, New York must act urgently to pass this bill and ensure testing and treatment for everyone.

Support and protect the essential home care workforce, and all 'excluded workers' during the COVID-19 pandemic. We call on Governor Cuomo and the State Legislature to:

- Provide "premium" pay to home care workers, and ensure all home care workers have access to PPE, paid time off, family care and all other benefits required for essential workers.
- Take steps to raise state revenue instead of cutting Medicaid funding during this public health emergency.
- Establish a \$3.5 billion fund to ensure excluded workers, including thousands of domestic workers, get the relief they need to survive this crisis. The COVID-19 crisis is hitting immigrants and Black and Brown New Yorkers the hardest, but these communities are being left out of relief.

Green New Deal for Home Care

- Through large-scale investment, we can transform home care jobs into high-quality, family-sustaining jobs that will strengthen our communities and improve New York's health and economic future - A Green New Deal for Care.

Investing in the home care sector would be a positive development for our state—one that has the potential to lift community members out of poverty while creating a care infrastructure that allows New Yorkers to live and age with dignity in their own homes and communities. We believe that investing in the home care workforce and improving the quality of home care jobs is a sound investment for our state, and could facilitate economic recovery as we grapple with record unemployment.

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In economic terms, investing in the home care workforce could save the state money. By increasing the supply of workers and bolstering access to in-home care, we can improve health outcomes and reduce costly interventions such as emergency room visits, hospitalization, and institutionalization. Higher wages can also enhance local economies by improving the pay, and therefore the spending ability, of workers in our state's fastest growing occupations.

Investing in home care also contributes to racial and gender equity. In New York State, approximately 80 percent of home care workers are people of color, including 72 percent who are women of color.¹ Nationally, women of color comprise the largest and fastest-growing segment of the broader direct care workforce; between 2016 to 2026, the number of women of color in this sector is expected to rise by 6.3 million, while the number of white women will decline by nearly 400,000.² By improving conditions for home care workers, we can directly strengthen the economic prospects of women of color and their families.

Currently, the state invests billions in economic development funds with questionable returns regarding jobs or benefits to those living in the state; using those funds to improve pay and supports for home care workers would enhance our ability to recruit and retain a qualified home care workforce, including paid family and friends acting as caregivers. We must look creatively at our economic development dollars and invest in jobs that will lift up women and people of color.

1 Authors' analysis of the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey, 2014-2018 five-year sample.

2 Stephen Campbell, "Racial and Gender Disparities Within the Direct Care Workforce: Five Key Findings," PHI, October 25, 2017.

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Increase compensation for home care workers. First and foremost, we need to improve wages and benefits. Despite the current low wages in this field, home care is not a low-skill job. Caring for older adults and those with disabilities is intensive, high-skill, and essential work, and it must be compensated accordingly. In the very near future, we must lift the minimum wage in the Hudson Valley and across New York to at least \$15 per hour—but also leverage Medicaid to raise pay above minimum wage to reflect the value of home care and to recruit and retain more workers.



Test new approaches. State and local authorities should invest in pilot projects in the Hudson Valley, and throughout the state, that are designed to increase recruitment and retention. We need to fund, test, and evaluate innovative strategies for cultivating a stable, growing workforce. Home care agencies and other providers often lack the resources to experiment with new strategies. One way to address this gap is through a statewide **Home Care Jobs Innovation Fund** that would enable providers to test approaches, such as improved training programs, communications technology, and worker supports such as transportation funds, scholarship programs, and retention bonuses.³



Find additional funding sources for home care, including economic development and workforce development funding. In addition to Medicaid, New York State should use other funding sources, such as economic and workforce development dollars, for initiatives to recruit, train, and retain the long-term care workforce. These funds should be made available to both Medicaid providers and senior services providers that do not bill Medicaid, and they should spur initiatives to provide:

- Enhanced wages and benefits
- Additional supports including child care and transportation for workers
- Adult learning/certification programs at community colleges and BOCES
- Supports and stipends for trainees
- Apprenticeship programs
- Peer mentoring
- Support for home care agencies converting to cooperatives



Fund career ladders in home care. With minimal opportunities for advancement, workers have little incentive to stay in the occupation as a long-term career. Programs like the Advanced Home Health Aide certification would help address this problem, allowing workers to get trained to perform additional health-related job tasks, at higher pay levels. New York State recently created this Advanced Aide certification, but did not fund its implementation. New York State should invest in the program, so we can pilot it effectively.



Create a universal long-term care plan in New York State that offers long-term care coverage for all who need it, and living wages to the direct care workforce. The state should enact the New York Health Act with long-term care included from day one of implementation, ensuring that all New Yorkers have access to good, fair long-term care if they need it. Provisions should be included in the legislation to guarantee that home care workers receive adequate compensation.

³ See PHI's proposal for the Home Care Innovation Fund at Allison Cook, "[New York Needs a Home Care Jobs Innovation Fund](#)," PHI, January 30, 2018.