

A LETTER TO DIRECT CARE WORKERS, HEALTH AND LONG TERM CARE EMPLOYERS, FAMILY CAREGIVERS, CONSUMERS, ADVOCATES AND POLICY MAKERS:



IT'S TIME TO GET ON BOARD TO SUPPORT THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE BOARD OF DIRECT CARE PROFESSIONALS!

We are **THIS** close! We are presented with an incredible opportunity to FINALLY ensure that those who work in direct care will receive the education they need and want in order to provide the best care and support possible. The new system will also give direct care workers the professional status they have long deserved.

We have worked for many years on changes to the state systems that have led us to this day. Many direct care workers, health and long term care employers, state departments, family caregivers, consumers, advocates, policy makers and others have been involved in these efforts.

We know that most direct care workers view their work as far more than "Just a Job". For many it is a Chosen Profession. For others it is a stepping stone to becoming a licensed nurse, social worker, or other health, long term care, or human service professional.

Unfortunately, the rest of the world has not viewed direct care as a profession. The jobs are too often viewed as being a "dime a dozen" or entry level. It is time for public image and public policy to change! Our state must ensure that policies, regulation, and standards are in place to support the direct care workforce that is so vital to the safety and well-being of all Iowans.

If you are among those who view direct care as a recognized career and IF you want the State of Iowa and others to support that...there is one way to do that...to create a Board of Direct Care Professionals within the Iowa Department of Public Health that will:

1. Provide state recognized career pathways and professional status for direct care workers.
2. Give credit to direct care workers that have worked in the field for many years by being "grandfathered" into the new system.
3. Provide direct care workers with opportunities to specialize in various areas such as Alzheimer's, hospice, mental health, oral care, brain injury, and other areas.
4. Make it easier to move from one type of direct care work to another (for example, from nursing home to hospice to home care).
5. Allow direct care workers the ability to keep their certifications current through continuing education...like other health professionals.
6. Give direct care workers ownership of their certifications or credentials.
7. Assure the public that the direct care workers who are assisting them or their loved ones have the knowledge and skills to do so.
8. Make sure that those people who are not suited to do the work based on the way they treat those they serve or their lack of skills, are not allowed to remain in the profession.

Benefits to All

This new system will benefit direct care workers, their profession, and the lowans they serve. Employers will also benefit from a highly qualified direct care workforce made up of people who are in it for the right reasons. Employers may also see a savings in the costs of staff turnover. Most important, the needs of those who rely on the care and support of direct care workers will be met.

Change Will Meet With Resistance

Where change is proposed, there will be those who want things to remain the same. There are many who will say NO and continue to view the work of direct care workers as unimportant, entry level and as unskilled work that anyone can do. We know that is NOT true! And that is why you, employers, and the lowans served must stand up in support of all we have worked for the past 20 years.

Huge Step in the Right Direction

As I have mentioned many times...the new system won't be perfect and there will be bugs to work out, but it IS a huge step in the right direction. You, health and long term care employers, lowans, and the State will need to share some responsibility for this new system. For example, direct care professionals will be required to pay a small fee to maintain their certifications. That is something routine for other professions such as doctors, plumbers, barbers, or dentists. That is part of taking some responsibility for your own credentials and profession.

Direct Care Worker Involvement

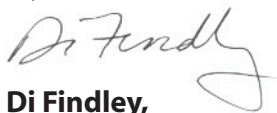
The recommendation to establish a Board of Direct Care Professionals has been driven by other direct care workers. The ICA has ensured that the voice of direct care workers has been well represented throughout the years that we have been working with the State and others on these issues. Direct care workers were appointed by the Governor to serve on the task force to develop the new system. Direct care workers have served as co-chairs of the task force since its beginning. Direct care workers were selected by the state to serve on the Direct Care Professional Education Review Committee that is reviewing the training and education curriculum and other educational materials to make sure they "make sense" to direct care workers. The membership of the new Board of Direct Care Professionals will require that the majority of those who serve on the Board are direct care professionals from different areas of care (in home care, nursing home, hospital, etc.).

Time To Get On Board!

We are "THIS" close, but without your voice **NOW**...we may never have this opportunity again. Please sign on at <http://bit.ly/DCPBoardLetter>.

[Click here](#) to visit our homepage and read the legislation developed by the Direct Care Worker Advisory Council that calls for the establishment of the Board of Direct Care Professionals.

My best,



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For technical questions about the new system or the legislation please call Jennifer Furler,
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Thanks for your help! If you have any questions or concerns about my letter or the new system, please give me a call.

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