

418 Hours

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Four hundred and eighteen hours. As of July 1 that is how many more hours per year a personal assistant in 54 counties throughout the state would have to work in order to make the same amount of money as a full-time worker at your local fast food chain.

That is because, on July 1 the minimum wage for fast-food workers increased to \$15 per hour statewide. On Long Island and in Westchester, the minimum wage for all other workers, and the wage that most Medicaid reimbursements afford personal assistants (PAs) in Consumer Directed Personal Assistants (CDPA), is \$14. In the 52 counties that make up “Upstate” (not counting New York City) that minimum wage is a mere \$12.50 per hour.

This means most fast-food workers in Long Island and Westchester will make \$2,080 per year more than a PA, and over \$5,000 per year more than a PA Upstate.

This is not to say that those who are working in fast food do not deserve a living wage. Quite the opposite CDPAANYS and our allies in Caring Majority believe everyone should have the ability to work a forty-hour week and earn enough to pay for the basics, plus some extras - like a night at the movies.

We also believe that PAs and other home-care workers, who provide critical services that allow disabled folks and seniors to live independent lives in the community, deserve more. These workers provide skilled services, but are paid wages that fail to cover their most basic needs. It is telling that many of these workers, paid through Medicaid, qualify for the income restricted program themselves.

When we ask why, officials and others will give any number of reasons. But the real reason is much uglier. If this were a profession dominated by white men, serving able-bodied white men, these workers would be given the respect they deserve.

But it is a profession dominated by women and primarily women of color. These women fulfill a role traditionally reserved for women and they do it for seniors and the disabled, whom no matter how much we pretend otherwise, society does not value.

CDPAANYS, as part of the New York Caring Majority, is building a movement to change that, and to win we need you to join! Fair Pay for Home Care is legislation that would establish a new minimum wage for home care workers, including PAs. This wage would be equal to 150 percent of the highest minimum wage in an area, meaning that as of July 1, it would have become \$22.50 per hour across the state.

Even as we face powerful opposition, our movement is surging forward. This past year, State Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins included what would have been a down payment on Fair Pay in the Senate’s budget response to Gov. Cuomo. While the proposal ultimately was not included, we learned how having a woman in “the room where it happens” changes the discussion, and we are building to make sure this proposal becomes a reality next year.

But to succeed, everyone must join this movement. Unlike hospitals, nursing homes and health plans, our power does not come from high-powered lobbyists and large campaign checks. It comes from you. So, if you haven’t already, go to cdpaanys.org and sign up for updates on Fair Pay for Home Care and other issues critical to CDPA.

CDPA relies on consumers making home care work for them. If we are to achieve Fair Pay for Home Care and secure decent wages for our workers, we must also get involved and make government do the same.