



Area Agency on Aging 1-B

# THE ADVOCATE

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## Issue Spotlight: Direct Care Workforce

Direct care workers, also known as personal care assistants, paid caregivers or home health aides, provide essential in-home care to Michigan residents who require assistance to live safely in their communities. Direct care workers provide a range of services including help with bathing, dressing, and housekeeping, providing safety and companionship to those they serve.

Home care providers in Michigan are struggling to recruit and retain the workers they need to meet the demand for their services, which include state funded programs for low-income older Michiganders. Low wages and benefits, strenuous workloads and limited career advancement opportunities along with the rapid growth of the older adult population have led to a shortage of direct care workers in Michigan and throughout the country. **Between 2016 and 2026 it is projected that Michigan will need 34,090 more direct care workers; making direct care work one of the fastest growing professions in Michigan, with a 28% increase expected in the coming decade.**

A 2016 PHI International report produced a profile of Michigan's direct care workforce, stating that nearly nine in 10 of Michigan's direct care workers are female, and almost one third are African American. Only one third of these workers have year-round, full-time work.

Addressing the shortage of direct care workers will require ongoing collaboration between policymakers, Michigan's Aging network and aging advocates to **identify strategies to recruit, train, retain and provide adequate wages to direct care workers.**

## Kalamazoo County becomes 69th MI County to Pass Senior Millage

In the August primary election Kalamazoo County voters approved a county-wide senior millage for the first time, becoming the 69th county in the state to pass a senior millage. The six-year, 0.35-mill property tax will raise \$2.82 million in its first year for senior services in the county, costing the owner of property with a taxable value of \$100,000, \$35 each year.

Senior millages fund higher levels of supportive services for seniors, preventing waitlists and meeting needs for services that are unable to be funded using other sources. Monroe and St. Clair Counties are the only two counties in Region 1-B that have a county-wide senior millage; several communities also have local millages that support senior programs. St. Clair County renewed their senior millage in this August's primary election.

The Area Agency on Aging 1-B (AAA 1-B) is a nonprofit agency serving the needs of older adults in Livingston, Macomb, Monroe, Oakland, St. Clair, and Washtenaw counties.

Contact Katie Wendel, (248) 798-0599 or by e-mail at [kwendel@aaa1b.com](mailto:kwendel@aaa1b.com) to join the Senior Advocacy Network or receive copies of AAA 1-B reports referenced in The Advocate.