

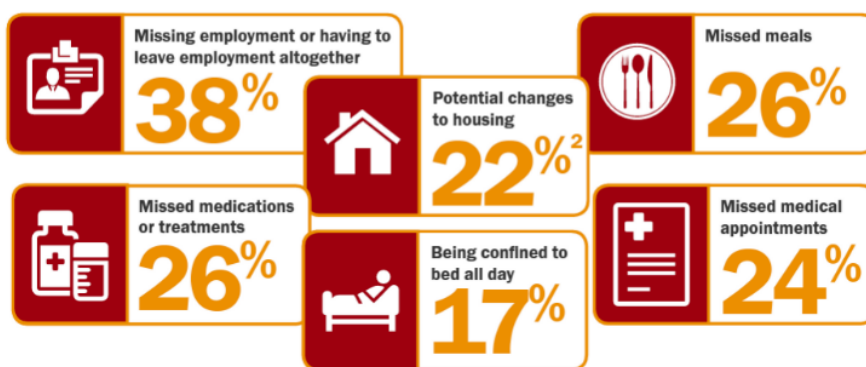
City of Madison Disability Rights Commission
210 Martin Luther King Jr Blvd, Room 523
Madison, WI 53703

Dear Commissioners,

I had hoped to join you for your February meeting, but due to my travel schedule this week, I am writing in solidarity with Alder Barbara Vedder to support her effort to engage the City of Madison to assist with the worsening personal care workforce crisis. As Executive Director of Access to Independence, as well as someone with experience providing personal cares for people with disabilities, I would like to share my thoughts on this issue, and ways the city could assist with solutions. While this issue is not going to be solved completely by the City of Madison, I believe there are ways for the city to help.

The long-term care workforce crisis has been worsening for several years, and is now at a point that threatens the systems that fund and provide these services, and the freedom and independence of those who rely on them. Even in Madison, often considered to be “resource rich”, there are too many people with disabilities who cannot find workers for some or all of their shifts, providers who cannot find workers to fill shifts for their clients, and families who are providing care to a level that impacts their employment and wellbeing. The bulk of the solution rests with the state and federal government to address the rates paid for these services, as well as other barriers that are driving people away from the workforce. That said, something must be done while we wait on those solutions.

The impact of this crisis is real, and here is a graphic to demonstrate that impact on the lives of people with disabilities across the state of Wisconsin. The graphic is courtesy of the Survival Coalition of Wisconsin Disability Organizations.



None of us should be content knowing so many of our family, friends, and neighbors are not entitled to the same basic rights and opportunities as the rest of us.

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I believe there are creative ways the City of Madison can support the workforce, and residents who rely on these services. Some ideas might include:

- Development of a local care cooperative to support residents with recruitment, hiring, and orientation of workers; create a pool of backup workers; and develop an information-sharing network. The cooperative could also be explored for providing workers access to benefits offered city employees.
- Local tax incentives for workers, or a sales tax holiday for workers.
- Provide workers access to free transit services, or vouchers for cab rides.

I appreciate Alder Vedder's efforts to involve the city in solutions to this crisis, and believe the Disability Rights Commission is an important partner in that effort. I am happy to assist how I can, and look forward to helping seek and implement solutions.

Sincerely,



Jason Beloungy, Executive Director
Access to Independence

