



**Testimony of Neil Richardson, Coordinator
DC Coalition on Long Term Care**

Council of the District of Columbia

Budget Hearing: Committee on Executive Administration & Labor

Anita Bonds, Chairperson

June 4, 2025

Testimony to the DC City Council

INTRODUCTION

The DC Coalition on Long Term Care is a 30-year-old collaboration uniting consumers, advocates, and healthcare providers to partner with the District government on long-term care policies and programs. Our mission is to ensure that low-income Washington, DC, residents with chronic conditions and disabilities can age in their communities safely, with dignity, and with access to quality care.

I bring decades of experience in policy development and strategic planning, having served three District mayors. I was the founding Director of Continuing Education at the University of the District of Columbia and previously served as Deputy Director at DC Appleseed. As a lifelong Washingtonian whose family has lived here for over a century, I am proud to call Ward 1 home. I am honored to serve as Coordinator of the Coalition.

BACKGROUND

The District is facing a critical workforce shortage in the home and institutional healthcare sector, disproportionately affecting low-income residents who rely on these services to age in place. Low wages and the increasing demand for care, driven by our aging population, have created an urgent need for workforce development solutions. Additionally, the city lacks sufficient training providers to meet the growing demand for skilled caregivers, further exacerbating the crisis.

Our Coalition appreciates the work of the Workforce Investment Council (WIC) and acknowledges the recent improvements in the WIC over the last several years including the leadership of Director Hubbard (and his recent predecessors). That said, we call on the WIC to be a stronger partner in creating post-secondary options for youth and adults in the District. Currently, the city has a fractured, confusing, and disjointed array of training providers and a

weak community college. The Office of the State Superintendent and the Deputy Mayor for Education have helped spark a robust set of career and technical options for students in District public schools. The District is collecting better data, led by the Office of Education Through Employment Pathways, and the Advanced Training Center is establishing strong and relevant Career and Technical programs for high school students who will be ready to begin their vocations upon graduation. CityWorks, a non-profit organization, is infusing new ideas and sparking a renewed focus on apprenticeship options for students. These are exciting times for high school students. However, there is a vast drop-off for students seeking coherent post-secondary options.

Other states and cities bridge high school students to a comprehensive community college that serves as a central hub for youth and adults seeking to advance their careers. The District lacks a strong or comprehensive community college. Healthcare careers, beginning with direct support aides, provide pathways to career advancement, including Licensed Practical Nurse and Registered Nurse roles. Our healthcare workforce crisis will only be addressed by creating a coherent post-secondary pathway, and the WIC has an opportunity to help lead this charge. The DC healthcare system is desperate for workers, from hospitals to nursing homes to home care.

Specifically, we request that the WIC work closely with the City Administrator and Deputy Mayors to convene an interagency meeting to address the fractured workforce system, including:

- Department of Health, including the Board of Nursing
- Department of Employment Services, including the Workforce Investment Council
- DC Department of Aging and Community Living
- DC Department of Health Care Finance
- DC Office of the State Superintendent of Education
- University of the District of Columbia

There is a proposal originating in the Council for a Coordinator position to convene and facilitate work in this sector. We request that the WIC partner closely with this Coordinator. This coordinator must not be symbolic—it must be empowered to deliver results.

As the city weighs proposals to spend hundreds of millions on a football stadium, we must ask: *What are our priorities?* Should we fund entertainment for billionaires—or essential care for our elders, many of whom face housing insecurity, hunger, and chronic health conditions? If the numbers add up and the deal is good for the city, we request that a portion of the net revenue be set aside to strengthen our long term care and senior citizen sector. The WIC can be a fantastic advocate. Without a strong health care network we will not have an economically competitive city.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The DC Coalition on Long Term Care makes the following recommendations to the Workforce Investment Council:

Champion Medication Aide Training

As a critical step in the career ladder for direct service workers, we call on the WIC to engage the Board of Nursing and Department of Health to make this a priority. For over three years, DC Health and the Board of Nursing have failed to approve any applications from providers to conduct Medication Aide Training, despite updated regulations in 2021. This training is essential for relieving registered nurses of routine medication administration, allowing them to focus on critical care needs.

Catalyze a Coherent Workforce System and Expand Training Capacity

The WIC has an important role in championing a more coherent post-secondary system that serves recent high school graduates, incumbent workers, and residents reentering society from the justice system. Not everyone wants or needs to attend a traditional university.

The District is facing a severe shortage of training providers. From 2021 to 2028, over 3,000 direct care job openings are projected annually, yet the number of Home Health Aide training programs has declined from six in 2021 to just two in 2025 due to restrictive regulations. The DC Health Care Workforce Partnership has identified 10 prioritized healthcare jobs, yet the District has no comprehensive way to train and fill these positions given the current workforce system's structure. We urge the District to expand training capacity by:

- Reducing barriers for existing training providers.
- Strengthening cross-agency collaboration.
- Encouraging new training providers to enter the field.
- Creating a comprehensive community college or a post-secondary Career and Technical school, or partnering with a nearby college in Northern Virginia or Maryland.

Our preferred recommendation is for the University of the District of Columbia to establish a comprehensive community college to support this and other workforce sectors that do not require a baccalaureate degree. We note that in the FY26 budget the UDC Workforce Development and Lifelong Learning division has had its budget cut 10.7%; this is completely out of step with the need and the opportunity for both the school and the city. If this is not feasible, the District should immediately explore partnerships with other community colleges to provide training in DC. The WIC has an important role in championing a more coherent post-secondary system that serves recent high school graduates, incumbent workers, and residents reentering society from the justice system. Not everyone wants or needs to attend a traditional university.

Regarding the DC Budget Challenge

While we recognize the fiscal pressures on the city, including possible reductions in federal funding such as FMAP and potentially Medicare and Medicaid cuts, we believe now is the time for action—not retrenchment.

Two key points underscore the urgency of this request:

1. The long-term care workforce crisis is worsening each year, and these workers are an ESSENTIAL element of the healthcare ecosystem. In a total budget of nearly \$23 billion, this funding represents less than half of one percentage point.

2. Our direct support workforce is in a CRISIS.

CONCLUSION

The Workforce Investment Council, along with the Executive Office and Council, must lead the necessary changes to support our aging population. Addressing the healthcare workforce crisis requires a multi-faceted approach, including expanded apprenticeship opportunities, strengthened training programs, and reduced barriers to workforce development.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony. We look forward to working with you to advance these critical workforce solutions. I am unable to attend this testimony today due to a calendar conflict; however, I would be pleased to meet and further explore these issues.

Respectfully submitted,

Neil Richardson

Interim Coordinator, DC Coalition on Long Term Care

ltccoalition@homecarepartners.org

<https://www.longtermcare.org>