



CONTACT: Karen Koch
kkoch@cilncp.org
(570) 327-9070 x239

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PRESS RELEASE

PA SILC & PCIL present “Rally for Our Lives”

Consisting of 17 statewide centers for independent living (CILs), individuals with disabilities, caregivers, and legislators, the “Rally for Our Lives” is set to demand quality home and community-based services and livable wages for caregivers

WHAT: On Tuesday, November 9th, the “Rally for Our Lives” will take place in Harrisburg, PA from 11 a.m. until noon. The rally will be held at the outdoor fountain of the Capitol Building, on Commonwealth Avenue. This event will have in-person support from 17 centers for independent living (CILs) and caregivers from across the entire state, as well as PA State Representative Ryan Bizzarro and PA State Senator Nikil Saval.

The goal of this rally is to bring awareness and immediate change to the home and community-based services system, in the form of quality services and increased, livable wages for caregivers.

“Pennsylvania is in the midst of a homecare crisis that was only added to by a worldwide pandemic,” says Shona Eakin, CEO of Voices for Independence, one of Western Pennsylvania’s largest in-home care providers for individuals with disabilities. “There are caregivers being underpaid, with the average homecare worker making \$12.00 an hour. Meanwhile, for-profit companies are hiring new workers for \$15.00 an hour. The homecare industry needs to have the ability to compete.”

This rally is unique not only in its urgent nature, but that voices from all across Pennsylvania will be heard at the event, ranging from politicians to the frontline caregivers and individuals whom they serve. Individuals from Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Erie, and more will be physically attending. This platform will allow for real-life stories to be told, directly from the people who have lived them. Many of these stories will describe the unwarranted and arbitrary service cuts that are putting the lives of Pennsylvanians with disabilities at risk of institutionalization. We are demanding that the Managed Care Organizations be held accountable by the Governor’s Office of Long-Term Living.

“The entire caregiving industry is on life support right now. I am one of several caregivers for my brother who has Duchenne muscular dystrophy and requires 24 hour care at home. Given the low wages and lack of benefits, finding steady, consistent caregivers is a huge challenge,” said Hillary Rothrock of Harrisburg. “We need a significant rate increase now; anything less is just like putting a band-aid on a bullet hole.”

Caregivers across Pennsylvania have continued to provide essential, frontline care throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, serving individuals in the community, allowing them to remain independent at home, as opposed to a nursing facility.

Lynn Weidner, a caregiver in Allentown, added, "I am an essential and vital part of a person's day. I do this work because I love helping others, but it has come at great personal cost. I've been a caregiver since 2003, but I'm still just making \$12.50 and lack basic benefits like health insurance and paid time off. We desperately need significant and permanent rate increases to strengthen our caregiver workforce. It's the only way to ensure that our Pennsylvania's most vulnerable citizens receive the quality care they deserve."

RSVP's are not required, but if given, preferred by Monday, 11/8/2021

WHERE: Pennsylvania State Capitol Complex
Outdoor Fountain on Commonwealth Ave (across from Soldier's Grove)
531-559 Commonwealth Ave, Harrisburg, PA 17120

WHEN: Tuesday, November 9th at 11 a.m.

CONFIRMED SPEAKERS:

- Pennsylvania State Senator Nikil Saval
- Pennsylvania State Senator Art Haywood
- Pennsylvania State Representative Ryan Bizzarro
- Pennsylvania State Representative Steve Samuelson
- Pennsylvania State Representative Michael Schlossberg
- Additional caregivers and recipients of services

Interview opportunities will be available following the rally.

ABOUT PA SILC:

The PA SILC is a nonprofit, cross-disability, consumer-controlled organization dedicated to securing public policies that ensure civil rights for people with disabilities. The PA SILC was established in 1992 to comply with the federal Rehabilitation Act Amendments, which requires states to create a consumer-controlled advisory committee to the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation's Independent Living Program. In 1992, the federal Rehabilitation Act Amendments gave SILC co-signing authority on the federally-mandated State Plan for Independent Living (SPIL).

ABOUT PCIL:

The PCIL is a membership association of CILs located in Pennsylvania. The PCIL's mission is to support the network of CILs and to advance the Independent Living movement.