



LETTER: Mass. should boost entry-level pay for human service jobs

To the editor:

While every industry faces a worker shortage, the crisis growing in human services should be sounding alarm bells on Beacon Hill. I am a guardian for a young man who is currently receiving services at an adult vendor called Melmark New England. I feel blessed that he is being served and I realize I am fortunate to have secured services for him over 10 years ago.

The human services sector is experiencing a challenging workforce crisis, and the rapidly escalating cost of housing and goods is making it worse. Because of low rates of salary reimbursement from the state, many jobs remain vacant and access to critical services by vulnerable residents is becoming more limited.

In addition to economic forces, the workforce crisis is driven by state reimbursements that are too low to provide adequate wages. Human services agencies cannot compete with retail and delivery jobs.

The commonwealth, which finds itself with an enormous budget surplus, must act now and boost entry-level human services wages to \$20 an hour — a wage that is commensurate with the important and difficult work done by human services direct-

care workers. We need the state to invest \$581 million in a special fund that will enable providers to pay \$20 an hour for direct care workers.

I urge the Senate, including Sen. Barry Finegold, to fully fund the human services workforce to ensure everyone in Massachusetts can access safe, quality care and services.

Frank Bird

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