

RCW 49.95.005 Findings—Intent—2020 c 309. (1) The legislature finds that, as the citizens of Washington state age and their life expectancy increases, demand for long-term care is also on the rise. Like many Americans, Washingtonians prefer to stay in their own homes and communities as they age, fueling an increased demand for home-based long-term services and supports. Nationally, the direct care workforce is expected to increase by more than one million jobs, making this one of the fastest growing occupations in the country.

(2) As the state of Washington is a national leader in supporting individuals to receive services in their own homes where self-direction, autonomy, choice, and dignity is valued. The average needs and acuity levels of people served in their homes has increased and become more diverse. The prevalence of individuals with complex behaviors due to their disabilities is a growing issue experienced by individuals who need assistance with personal care tasks in their own homes and to be able to fully integrate in community living.

(3) The lack of workplace safety, including incidents of verbal and physical aggression, as well as sexual harassment, is an occupational hazard for many long-term care workers, including those who work in the homes of the person to whom they provide care. The risk may be outside the control of the individual receiving care due to the conduct of others in the home. The risk may be due to symptoms or conditions that can manifest with individuals communicating their needs in ways that an individual caring for the person may experience or interpret as harassment, abuse, or violence. In any event, caregivers should not have to experience discrimination, abusive conduct, and challenging behaviors without assistance or redress.

(4) Workers who have adverse experiences at work can manifest negative physical and mental health outcomes. These workers often leave the field of direct caregiving, resulting in fewer available caregivers in the workforce, increased turnover, and lower quality of care received by individuals in their own homes.

(5) Adequate preparation of caregivers helps both the caregiver and person receiving care. Caregivers should be equipped with information, including relevant care plans and behavioral support interventions, existing problem-solving tools, and strategies to improve safe care delivery.

(6) The legislature further finds that caregivers are the backbone of long-term services and supports in Washington. Therefore, the intent of chapter 309, Laws of 2020 is to reduce the instances of harassment, discrimination, and abuse experienced by caregivers, and ensure that they feel safe while providing care while also prioritizing the continuity of care for individuals who rely on their assistance. This will improve the quality of care provided to Washingtonians and build a strong workforce to meet future care needs in the state. [2020 c 309 § 1.]