

**TO:** Montana Legislative Finance Committee 2023 Biennium  
**FROM:** Jacquie Helt, Montana State Director, SEIU 775  
**DATE:** November 8<sup>th</sup>, 2021  
**SUBJECT:** Public Testimony

Dear Members of the Legislative Finance Committee 2023 Biennium:

My name is Jacquie Helt, and I am the Montana State Director with SEIU 775, a union representing 45,000 long-term care workers providing quality in-home care, nursing home care, behavioral health and adult day health services in Washington and Montana.

Today, direct care and healthcare workers continue to be at the frontline of the pandemic. We should all be proud and in awe of the work and unwavering commitment they have shown; they have saved lives and kept our loved ones safe. Yet, healthcare workers such as nurses and direct care workers remain below national averages. Funds from the American Rescue Plan could and should serve as a recognition of the labor, care, and commitment that caregivers have always shown, particularly during these difficult times, yet no ARPA funds have been approved in recognition of their work and sacrifice.

We believe ARPA funds should be distributed in the most effective, quick, and responsible manner to Montanans that need it the most. While ARPA funds are being used to attract more healthcare workers to Montana, no funds have been utilized to strengthen and maintain Montana's current direct care and healthcare workforce.

ARPA funds provide a unique, historical opportunity to address some of the long-term challenges our state is facing, particularly regarding the need for good paying jobs and to sustain and invest in a strong workforce prepared to meet the needs of an aging population and of people with disabilities. We are here to ask you to take this opportunity to support initiatives with a proven capacity to expand and strengthen the direct care workforce Montana urgently needs.

Thank you again for your time and consideration.