

Gray Panthers Hosts Conversation on Improving the Quality of Paid Home Care

By Gail Evans

On March 1, Gray Panthers convened representatives from a range of stakeholders to brainstorm possible projects to improve job quality for home care workers so as to improve the quality of care they provide. Gray Panthers sees the issue as reflective of system ageism. “When older persons are not valued and are seen as a burden on society, those who work for them are not valued either,” said Jack Kupferman, President of Gray Panthers.

Hosted by the U.S. Department of Labor Women’s Bureau, more than 20 articulate and passionate advocates, activists, policy analysts, and government workers – including a home care agency owner and a union leader – discussed the looming caregiver crisis and its impact on older New Yorker and persons with disabilities.

At stake in the crisis is the well-being of vulnerable populations who depend on their paid home health aides and homecare workers to supplement the care their families provide, or to be their sole care providers. Quality care comes from quality jobs. The direct care workforce lacks adequate compensation, opportunity, recognition and support. These job realities also threaten the retention of care workers who seek better opportunities in other fields.

Kupferman asked the group to put their brain power to work, first to specify the issues and needs affecting home care workers and then to come up with suggestions for small initiatives the group could undertake as concerned stakeholders to improve home care job quality. Fired up, participants shared insights and ideas for close to two hours.

“This is too exciting to end with a one-time meeting,” said Kupferman. “We plan to hold additional meetings where we will refine the ideas for projects that emerged today. There was so much investment expressed, I’m sure we can agree on some small but achievable initiative that will pack maximum impact for its size.”

Gray Panthers leaders active at this important event included Jack Kupferman, President; Rolly Woodyatt, Steering Committee; Isabelle Leighton, Asian Americans for Equality, Gray Panthers; Alison Cook, Stephen Campbell, PHI Paraprofessional Healthcare Institute.

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