Background and Purpose
In September, 2017 concerned citizens and professionals gathered for the “Area wide Summit on Direct Care and Paraprofessional Development” sponsored by the Willging Endowment and the Erickson School at UMBC. The “Summit” addressed resources and needs affecting all the core elements in direct service workforce development such as compensation, working conditions, career pathways, training, certification, delegations, apprenticeships, mentoring, job satisfaction, professional and public recognition etc. (Summit, 2017). As a result of these efforts, in January 2018 the “Maryland Regional Direct Services Collaborative” was formed and with the assistance of the Rodham Institute at George Washington University, the Collaborative has established a leadership group and identified the following three priority areas:

- Wages and Benefits
- Expanding the Workforce
- Training and Education

Increasing the DCW Pool
There are a variety of direct service workers in the long term supports and services industry serving older adults and individuals with disabilities. The labor categories which are of primary interest in this Issue Brief are: CNAs, GNAs, personal care aides, home health aides, and attendant care providers.

The purpose of this Issue Brief is to provide background and analysis of the workforce shortage of Direct Service Workers (DSWs) and how the pool of workers may be increased to meet the health care needs of older adults and people with disabilities in Maryland. The demographic shifts, primarily caused by people living longer, is putting a higher demand and strain on our country’s long-term care system. In Maryland and the District of Columbia, the adult population aged 65 and over is expected to increase by more than 330,000. In less than six years, by 2024, our country will need an estimated additional 1.1 million DSWs, according to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics. In fact, Maryland will need almost 40% more DSWs to meet the growing demand for care. While women make up the primary labor pool for DSWs, the pool of women aged 25-64 will grow by less than one percent. In Maryland, working age adults will increase
by less than 2%. This growth rate will require a strategy that can attract a wider diversity of workers into this sector. This shortage will have a disproportionate impact on rural areas and leave seniors, people with disabilities, and veterans without adequate care, further exacerbating the demand for care to be supplemented by unpaid family caregivers. Poor job quality, lack of wages, minimal to no benefits all contribute to the challenges our country faces in recruiting and retaining enough workers to meet the growing demand. In fact, one in two DSWs leave their job within 12 months.

The range of both threats and opportunities are many ranging from building on apprenticeships, exploring avenues for new immigrant populations, to easing worker criteria or restrictions. Faced with shrinking revenue, expanding needs, and competing policy measures that require budgetary allocation, one of the primary threats to implementing solutions to increasing the worker pool is a lack of new revenue at the federal and state level to support innovations in the workforce area. As the federal landscape for new and existing revenue that support the workforce, such as Medicaid, continue to face insecurities, states are tightening the purse strings of their state budgets. Lack of adequate revenue already challenges the current existing workforce and limit how states can experiment with worker recruitment and retention. While a well-trained workforce is necessary, federal and state standards and licensure practices and costs are also prohibitive in recruiting and retaining the numbers of qualified workers we need. Additionally, low-wages make recruiting and retaining this critical workforce even more challenging. While earnings for DSWs in the Maryland and DC area range from $14,000 to $28,000, the median hourly wage is $13, making the annual median income for workers in Maryland less than $23,000. Such low wages and a lack of benefits, training, and career mobility increase turnover. This just further exacerbates existing challenges of worker shortage.

Yet another threat to increasing the worker pool is the cultural devaluing of care work due to long-standing pervasive racism and based on the perception of this work as “women’s work.” However, states are forging a pathway forward, experimenting with ways to recruit and retain workers. Wisconsin offers a bonus for DSWs after working in the field for six months. The Affordable Care Act and state programs like the Workforce Shortage Student Assistance Grant Program offers tuition assistance, loan forgiveness, and, in some cases, job placement for students who plan on entering specific career fields upon graduation or completion of training. And, at the least, many states are instituting commissions, task forces, and studies to identify strategies to deal with workforce shortage.
This Issue Brief, prepared by the “Increasing the Worker Pool” Task Force, will provide a framework outlining the current challenge Maryland faces and proposing potential solutions. This framework will spur a wider discussion which will occur at the “Reinventing the Direct Services Workforce” meeting in September, 2018.

**Proposed Problem Statement**
The aging demographics, needs of people with disabilities, veterans, the prevalence of chronic diseases like cancer, and the growing prevalence of dementia are just some of the primary factors increasing the demand for short and long-term care. With a majority of people desiring care in their home and communities, there is a growing demand for an adequate pool of DSWs. Despite the urgent and growing need for care, states, like Maryland, are contending with the pervasive challenge of not having enough qualified workers to meet the current demands across all care settings including nursing homes, hospitals, home health agencies, and adult care facilities.

To meet current and growing demand, states must strategically recruit and retain workers. This Task Force will explore, discuss, and develop a strategic approach to this need for the state of Maryland. By understanding the national and Maryland landscape, the contributing factors to workforce shortage, and an analysis of what other states are doing, this Issue Brief will set the framework for the Task Force and come up with possible measurable recommendations and action steps to recruit and retain workers in Maryland over a set period of time. Some of the areas we will explore, consider, and include in the brief are included below.

**Components to Explore**
1. Current and future projected shortage of DSWs
   a. Geographic trends in shortage
   b. Turnover rate
2. Description of the impact of not having enough workers
3. Current barriers to recruiting DSWs
   a. Current barriers to recruiting and retaining DSWs
4. Current pathways to recruit DSWs
   a. Current approaches to recruit and retain DSWs
5. Existing state models to increase the DSWs pool and the elements that can be considered and applied to Maryland
6. *Viable and *appropriate recommended strategies to increase the DSWs pool
   a. Programmatic
   b. Legislative
7. Values framework and baseline of parameters to always consider when solving for workforce shortage.
   a. Considerations for anyone attempting to solve for DSWs shortage
8. Bonus (pending time and capacity)
   a. Accompanying literature review specific to DSWs and Maryland.