

Statement on Coronavirus: CHCA President Adria Powell

Throughout New York, the COVID-19 pandemic has created an urgent and unprecedented crisis. Every day, the number of cases surges, as health and long-term care providers struggle to keep pace. The consequences are unimaginable if we don't each do our part to respond.

Home care workers are on the frontlines of this response, ensuring that their clients—older adults and people with disabilities—have what they need to get through this moment.

The good news is that home care workers in New York (and increasingly around the country) have been deemed essential personnel in the emergency response. For Cooperative Home Care Associates (CHCA), this designation means that home care workers can continue to earn a living, access free childcare from the city, and provide vital services to their clients. It also means that home care workers are receiving much-needed recognition for the key role they play in keeping older people and people with disabilities safe and healthy—though a great deal of work remains to be done to ensure that our broader culture also recognizes them to be as valuable as other healthcare workers.

As an essential business, CHCA remains open. We recognize that we must continue to serve as an anchor for both our workers and the community, and we are confident that our workers have the skills and guidance to deliver quality care through this crisis. For example, CHCA workers have undergone proper training in infection control and understand that they should remain home if they are sick. They are also trained to monitor and report changes in a client's condition, which will help identify whether a client has become ill and needs targeted support.

But this crisis has also forced us to make concessions, given limited resources. We're unfortunately not able to continue delivering our training and workforce development program during this time. Our training approach relies on in-person, interactive methods, and we don't have enough resources to immediately create and deliver training effectively through a hybrid virtual/in-person format. That said, we are exploring other solutions over the next few months that will improve our workers' abilities to deliver home care, specifically by increasing our agency's capacity to more easily identify and target supports at clients with COVID-19 symptoms. In addition, CHCA—as with other home care agencies across New York—doesn't have enough gloves, masks, sanitizer, and other supplies for the weeks and months ahead. Without personal protective equipment, workers are at a heightened risk of contracting the

coronavirus and transmitting it to their own families and their clients. Already, we've noticed a concerning trend of home care workers opting to not work out of fear of infection and transmission.

HOW WE'VE COME TOGETHER

Along with PHI, our affiliated organization in the Bronx, we have launched a modest fund to support home care workers. The money donated to this fund provides immediate financial support to CHCA and our workers. This support will also help PHI build a stronger home care workforce within CHCA and across New York State—and effectively tackle the COVID-19 crisis.

Additionally, a sewing cooperative, Opportunity Threads, is working with its cooperative network, The Carolina Textile District, to sew thousands of masks for CHCA.

New Yorkers have a long history of coming together in times of crisis. CHCA is committed to strengthening our workforce at this critical time so that older people and people with disabilities remain safe and healthy in their homes. We're on this journey together.

Sincerely,

Adria Powell, President, Cooperative Home Care Associates