

# New York Caring Majority Is Winning

*“We put care in action”*

— Sage Jobsis, member of New York Caring Majority

In 2022, New York Caring Majority (NYCM), co-convened by Jews for Racial and Economic Justice (JFREJ) and Hand in Hand: The Domestic Employers Network, secured more than \$7.4 billion in the New York state budget to raise wages for home care workers. The coalition’s Fair Pay for Home Care campaign won the largest investment in home care wages in any U.S. state. It’s a concrete step toward ending New York’s worst-in-the-nation home care

worker shortage—and a landmark achievement that contributes to intersecting movements for economic justice, racial justice, disability justice, immigrant rights, and gender equity. The continuing campaign offers a model that can be replicated in states across the country. It did not happen easily or overnight. This is a story of long-term relationship building, smart strategy, and experienced movement builders combining grassroots organizing and legislative advocacy, research and storytelling, and uniting stakeholders across differences to come together around an issue that affects everyone: care.

*New York Caring Majority goes to the state capitol and pledges not to leave until Fair Pay for Home Care is in the state budget. Legislators offer office space and other support.*



## What's at Stake

Agnes McCray needs home care to live safely and with dignity in her own home. Her home health attendant recently left after 14 years because the wages weren't enough to support herself and her young daughter.

These needs shouldn't be pitted against one another. We need solutions that work for people who need care and people who provide care.

According to a Mercer labor analysis, New York has the worst home care worker shortage in the nation. People who need care to remain in their own homes and communities cannot access it, while people who want to do this work can't afford to because of the poverty wages. When New York Caring Majority launched the Fair Pay for Home Care campaign, home care workers in most of the state were earning \$12.50 an hour. Their median annual income was \$22,000. More than half were on public assistance.

New York Caring Majority knows it is necessary, and possible, to grow the home care workforce and ensure care for everyone who needs it. Raising worker wages is the first step.

*NYCM paid home care aides \$22.50/hour to support members who took action in Albany. For some, it was the first time in months they had three meals a day, a shower, and the care that enabled them to sleep in a bed.*

## Care Is Everyone's Issue

Everyone will need or provide care at some point in our lives. So why are care workers undervalued and working in unsustainable jobs? The answers lie in lack of public investment in care, combined with inequities that impact a majority women of color, largely immigrant workforce employed mostly by older adults and disabled people.

Through storytelling, media, and relational organizing, New York Caring Majority invited New Yorkers across the state and across the political spectrum—including Democratic and Republican state legislators as well as their urban, rural, and suburban constituents—to share their own care stories, making it clear that care is everyone's issue.

In 2022 alone, almost 6,000 New Yorkers took action for Fair Pay for Home Care.



- 2,500+ calls to legislators from members
- 1,000 phone calls to mobilize grassroots supporters
- 209 grassroots meetings
- 30+ grassroots rallies and events
- 38 people arrested for civil disobedience

## Organizing and Advocacy that Wins

***“Our organizing, led by older adults, disabled people, family caregivers and home care workers across the state, put the home care crisis in the spotlight.”***

—Ilana Berger, co-director of New York Caring Majority, in *Convergence*

For grassroots groups to secure billions in state funding for marginalized communities takes savvy strategy, a clear demand, and skilled organizing and advocacy built on strong relationships and trust.

The seeds of Fair Pay for Home Care were planted in 2011, when Jews for Racial and Economic Justice (JFREJ), Hand in Hand, the National Domestic Workers Alliance (NDWA), and their NYC affiliates led neighborhood assemblies where older

adults, family caregivers, and paid caregivers came together to imagine what it would take to build a caring economy. In 2015, JFREJ and Hand in Hand convened organizations across the state to form the New York Caring Majority coalition. They spent years building political power and growing a base of supporters to fight for an investment in home care wages in the state budget.

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit in 2020, suddenly home care became part of the national conversation. The importance of home and community-based care became clear as COVID spread and nearly 20,000 New Yorkers died unnecessarily in nursing homes. New York Caring Majority seized the moment and launched the Fair Pay for Home Care campaign, calling for home care wages to be 150% of the state’s minimum wage.

TIMELINE



**2011–2014** JFREJ, Hand in Hand, and NDWA organize neighborhood assemblies to imagine and build a caring economy

**2015** New York Caring Majority formed

**2016** Continued relationship building, coalition building

**2017** First NY state budget fight prevents cuts to services, wins \$3 million study on rural homecare workforce

**2019** Universal long-term care included in NY Health Act; NYCM works to win a Home Care Jobs Innovation Fund

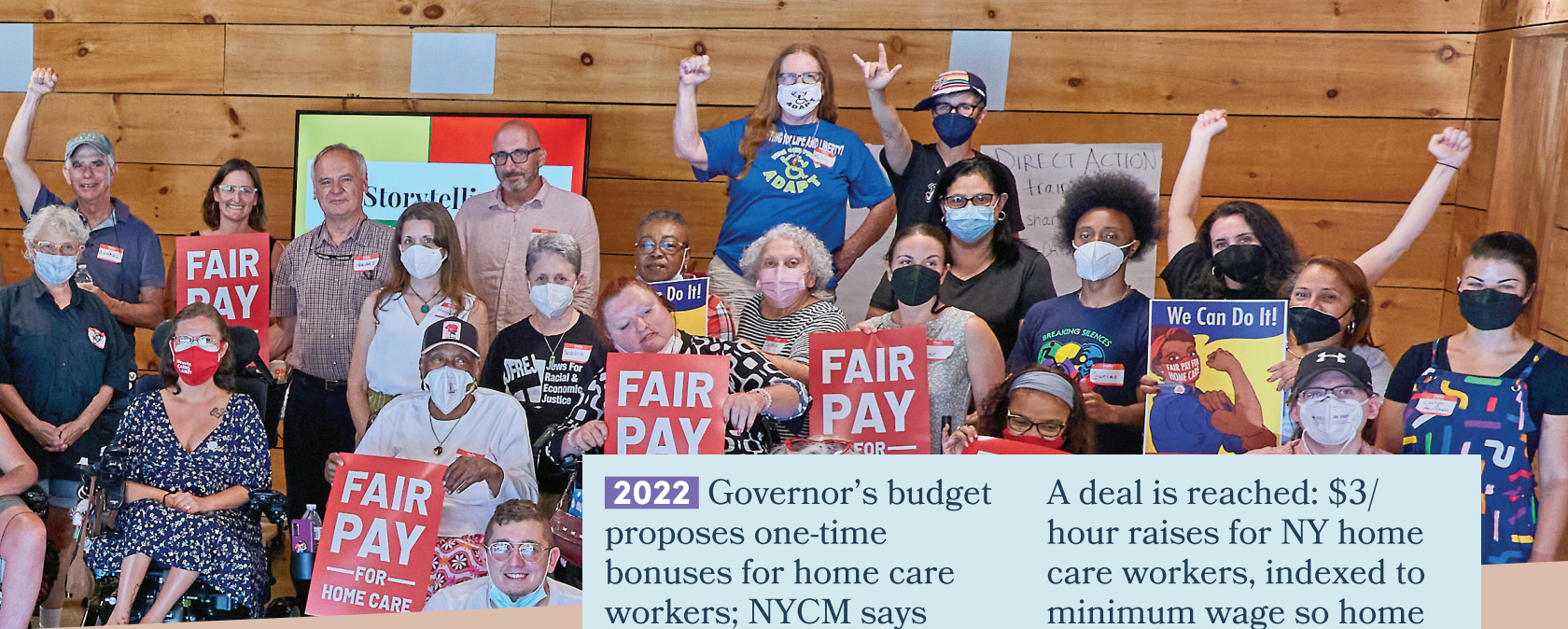
**2020** Fair Pay for Home Care Campaign launched amid COVID-19 pandemic

Organizing and mutual-aid Zooms; research published on Hudson Valley home care workforce shortage; PSAs; rallies and events

**The Fair Pay for Home Care campaign strategically combines:**

**Grassroots Organizing** Years of organizing had built a strong base ready to take action. Across the state, disabled people, older adults, and care workers organized actions and events in their own communities, pitched their own stories to the press, met with legislators, and more. New York Caring Majority organizers created infrastructure

to support them with toolkits, trainings, and an array of ways to take action amid a pandemic in which many of them were especially vulnerable. Actions were creative and accessible, and there were many points of entry, from writing letters to the editor to setting up meetings with legislators to bird-dogging the governor to getting arrested outside the governor’s office during the final days of the budget fight.



**2021** Continued organizing, advocacy, coalition building, media outreach, research leads to inclusion of Fair Pay for Home Care in state budget negotiations

SEIU 1199, AARP-NYS, Offices for the Aging, and others join the fight

**2022** Governor’s budget proposes one-time bonuses for home care workers; NYCM says no, they need higher wages permanently

NYCM hosts 25 events; coalition grows as NAACP, faith leaders, and others join

Bipartisan supermajorities in both houses support Fair Pay for Home Care

A deal is reached: \$3/hour raises for NY home care workers, indexed to minimum wage so home care wages will remain \$3 above minimum wage

It’s not enough—the fight for a fair wage continues—but it is already historic. A grassroots campaign has won \$7+ billion in state funding that will immediately benefit older adults, disabled people, and a majority women of color workforce.

**Legislative Advocacy** 150 state legislators—Democrats and Republicans—signed on to support Fair Pay for Home Care in 2022. Their support was won through advocacy led by older adults, disabled people, family caregivers, and home care workers who met one-on-one with their representatives. Legislators visited constituents in their homes and saw the impacts of home care on people’s lives. New York Caring

Majority backed up these personal connections with research that showed the costs of public funding to raise wages for care workers would be more than offset by the resulting savings, tax revenues, and economic spillover effects.

**Coalition Building** New York Caring Majority built a functional big-tent coalition that includes large home care agencies, independent living centers, disabled people, home care

# Elements of a Successful Campaign



workers, older adults, caregivers, disability rights advocates, unions, civil rights groups, and faith groups from all over the state. Coalition members bring different skill sets and networks, and the coalition is both strong and nimble, with good communication, lean infrastructure, and each organization doing what it does best, in solidarity and alignment.

## ***Storytelling and Narrative Change***

Through PSAs; earned TV, print, and radio coverage in all 11 major media markets in New York; letters to the editor; one-on-one story sharing; and art-filled in-person and online events, New York Caring Majority has changed the narrative, uplifting care as a universal issue.

***Unity and Solidarity*** In a polarized time, New York Caring Majority brought together groups that have

too long been pitted against one another in state budget fights—employers and workers, legislators from both political parties, and rural, urban, and suburban New Yorkers from regions across the state. The diverse group of supporting organizations includes home care agencies as well as SEIU 1199, AARP-NY, and NAACP-NY.

## ***Creating a Culture of Care***

With online events, actions people can take from home, and in-person actions with accessible transportation, lodging, and care provided by workers paid a fair wage, Fair Pay for Home Care embodies the values of access and care—ensuring the people most impacted can participate, and demonstrating what the world would be like if we invested in care.

## Immediate Impact, and Part of a Bigger Picture

The Fair Pay for Home Care campaign is achieving concrete improvements for people who provide and receive care while meaningfully advancing movements for a more just, sustainable, and caring economy and society. The fight is not over in New York, and it is also not limited to New York. There is a severe home care workforce shortage nationwide, with an estimated 4.7 million positions needing to be filled by 2028. The organizing model that

is winning fair pay for home care in New York can be used to fight for living wages and affordable home care in states across the country.

Investing in home care workers expands access to care and creates a care infrastructure that allows people to live and age with dignity in their own homes; lifts people out of poverty; advances racial and gender equity; improves health; and creates possibilities for a better economic future. New York Caring Majority shows it's possible to unite across differences and win ways forward that benefit us all.



*Fair Pay for Home Care garnered coverage in 11 New York State media markets and every major newspaper in the state.*

## Resourcing This Work

New York Caring Majority was able to launch Fair Pay for Home Care amid the pandemic because of the years of organizing and relationship building that had already occurred, and because funder investments in organizational capacity, including staffing, enabled Hand in Hand and JFREJ to respond quickly and strategically to an urgent need and an emergent opportunity. Multiyear general-operating support; capacity-building investments in staffing, strategic communications, and narrative change; and funding to cover the costs of accessible organizing and actions can resource this work as we continue to fight for fair pay in New York and replicate this model to create economies of care in states across the country.

## About Hand in Hand and New York Caring Majority

Hand in Hand: The Domestic Employers Network is a national organization of employers of nannies, house cleaners, and home care workers who believe that dignified and respectful working conditions benefit worker and employer alike. Hand in Hand is a small organization making a big impact from homes to hearing rooms, the streets to state governments. Hand in Hand and Jews for Racial and Economic Justice co-manage New York Caring Majority, a coalition of older adults, disabled people, family caregivers, and home care workers from across New York State. We are organizing to build a sustainable and just caring economy. JFREJ and Hand in Hand have long been partners in the domestic worker movement and long-term care sector and have a track record of policy impact. In addition to Hand in Hand and JFREJ, New York Caring Majority Steering Committee members are the Association on Aging in New York State, Chinese-American Planning Council, Consumer Directed Personal Assistance Association of NY State, Cooperative Home Care Associates, and New York Association on Independent Living.



**HAND IN HAND**  
THE DOMESTIC  
EMPLOYERS NETWORK

