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Refusing to Suffer Silently, Kentucky Nonprofits Speak Out on Nonprofit Workforce Shortage Crisis

Suffering silently is perhaps the worst approach to advancing the mission of a nonprofit. Media accounts about the workforce shortages at restaurants and airlines can be seen everywhere and individuals are quoted sharing their experiences with slow service and cancelled flights. But what about the [well-documented workforce shortages at charitable nonprofits](#) and the impact on the individuals and communities they serve? Shouldn't this crisis be "above the fold" and top-of-the-broadcast for media outlets? Nonprofits in Kentucky are not waiting silently for the news to get out; they are making news themselves.

On January 5, the **Kentucky Nonprofit Network** (KNN) hosted a virtual news conference, [Workforce Crisis Puts Vulnerable Kentuckians at Risk](#), featuring five nonprofit leaders representing a coalition of over 70 health and human services providers in the Commonwealth. The speakers made clear that the challenges they face have been around for decades; the pandemic, however, have turned frustrations for operations into crises of survival.

Danielle Clore, Executive Director & CEO of KNN, put the concerns over the nonprofit workforce opened by explaining that "nonprofits are the safety net. Nonprofits are

the first place to turn and the last place to turn, the places where folks know they can count on to get the help that they and their families need.” She made clear that this makes addressing issues like government contract reform, reimbursement rates, and funding sources critical for the communities that benefit and rely on nonprofits.

Amy Stead, CEO of the Kentucky Association of Private Providers, an organization representing nonprofits providing community-based care to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, shared that some individuals have been on the waiting list for over 20 years. Currently, many staff are working over 100 hours a week due to staffing shortages while are earning base rates of \$10 to \$11 per hour. She explained that nonprofit providers cannot afford to stay in business if this workforce crisis is not addressed and stressed that “if there are no community-based providers, there are no community-based services.”

Another nonprofit leader, Angela Yannelli, CEO of the Kentucky Coalition Against Domestic Violence, shared what’s at stake for survivors and their families. Without increases in funding and other much-needed reforms, waiting lists grow, preventions efforts will decline, quality of investigations and services will be affected. She summarized that at this time staff are burned out, underpaid, and facing a crisis of low wages and benefits in the middle of rising costs.

Having put a face on the problems the crisis is causing, participants on the news conference learned of clear policy solutions that are ripe for consideration. The coalition’s summary document, [Workforce Crisis Puts Vulnerable Kentuckians At Risk](#) , lays out short-term solutions. These include increases to reimbursement rates in the next budget and bridge payments to sustain services through June. Long-term solutions would provide regular cost-of-living adjustments and wage analyses, student loan forgiveness, childcare assistance, and a commitment to the health and wellbeing of Kentuckians. It also identified available funding sources, such as the budget reserve trust fund, budget surpluses, and [American Rescue Plan Act funds](#).

Many of the challenges discussed are in [The Scope and Impact of Nonprofit Workforce Shortages](#) report, as well as ongoing [activities and news reports](#) covering this issue. View recording of the [news conference](#).