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Addressing the Nonprofit Workforce Crisis ... the Nonprofit Advocacy Way

When organizations dedicated to serving the public good can't secure the workforce to provide vital services, the whole community suffers. That is the case right now, as thousands of nonprofit jobs go unfilled and nonprofits around the country are doing their part to raise **awareness** of the challenge to whole communities, to collect and **analyze** data to identify the problem and solutions, and take **action** to protect our communities.

Awareness

This month, nonprofit leaders have been speaking out, raising the alarm about the problems facing nonprofits that can't hire the staff they need. Rick Cohen of the National Council of Nonprofits appeared on television in Cleveland, **Ohio** declaring the high job vacancy rate in nonprofits "[a potential tragedy at hand](#). When we have a worker shortage, that means people in the community that can't get access to services that they need." Additional news stories about the growing crisis have appeared in [Connecticut](#), [New York](#), and across the country on dozens of [Scripps TV affiliates](#).

Relying on news reporting isn't enough. Heather Iliff, President and CEO of [Maryland Nonprofits](#), recently wrote in an op-ed, "Nonprofit staff are exhausted with extended long hours because of increased demands for services and staff vacancies" She points to government contracts that "don't cover even the basic costs of services" as one reason for low wages. To Iliff, "Where some see a labor shortage, we see a shortage of fair wages." In testimony before the **Massachusetts** Legislature recently, Michael Weekes, President and CEO of [Providers' Council](#), essentially agreed, calling on the Commonwealth to provide parity in compensation for human service workers. Weekes was the person who "blew the whistle" on the nonprofit workforce vacancy crisis in the [Not simply Help Wanted - but Help Needed](#), first published in this newsletter.

Analysis

As of this writing, more than 900 nonprofits in 49 states have responded to the call for information about the jobs vacancy crisis by completing the Survey on Nonprofit Workforce Shortage. The networks of the National Council of Nonprofits posted the online survey to gauge the scope of the workforce shortage problems for charitable organizations and determine the impact on their abilities to advance their missions. A preliminary analysis (the survey is still open for responses) found that that 15% reported job vacancy rates of between 10% and 19% and a troubling 26% responded that they had job openings for 20% to 29% of their positions. Twenty-seven percent reported that their waiting list had grown to more than a month due to job vacancies and one organization shared that it has more than 1,500 children waiting for services. The report further explores the causes of the job vacancies and solutions identified by survey participants. See [Preliminary Analysis: The Scope and Impact of Nonprofit Job Vacancies](#).

Action

In a regional forum to be held **Monday, December 6**, nonprofit leaders from Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island are coming together to provide testimonials and advance solutions to an audience of policymakers and the media. Organizers explain that as attention has turned from COVID relief to recovery, "nonprofits face unprecedented challenges attracting and retaining staff of all skill levels and salaries." They further assert that while workforce shortages across

industries have been well documented, the shortage in the nonprofit sector has been amplified by historic underfunding. The [Regional Forum on Nonprofit Workforce Crisis](#), sponsored by the **CT Community Nonprofit Alliance, Providers' Council** (MA), and the Rhode Island Community Provider Network, will give state and federal policymakers the opportunity to hear the magnitude of the crisis from the people living it and learn how neighboring states in the region are planning to resolve the problems.

Awareness, analysis, and action – these truly are all hallmarks of nonprofit advocacy in action.