



April 29, 2021

**NEWS RELEASE**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**The push for self-sufficiency & respect for caregivers:  
Heritage Christian Services moves frontline wage to elevate care professionals**

ROCHESTER — Heritage Christian Services is raising its base wage for frontline workers to \$15 an hour for all positions, effective May 9. Our residential staff, the majority of our positions, will now start at \$15.75, plus more for certain shifts. That’s a 20% increase for all frontline positions since the start of 2021, ranging to 30% for more than half of the job openings. It’s the largest percentage wage increase in the agency’s history.

As the seventh-largest employer in the Rochester region, Heritage Christian is making this change now to stabilize its workforce and to make a step forward in neutralizing poverty. The agency is committed to acquiring new and exceptional talent, continuing to improve their wage and ensuring that they remain engaged in the work that they do.

“We can no longer overlook what it takes to make a sustainable living,” said [Marisa Geitner](#), president and C.E.O. of Heritage Christian Services. “The care professionals in our community deserve more than minimum. We need to recognize the technical skills that care professionals apply to their daily work related to health support, communication, digital literacy and more.”

People with disabilities cannot wait any longer for the issue of an incomplete, underpaid workforce to be resolved. Staffing is needed now, for their health and wellness, for day-to-day activities. People with disabilities deserve quality care and support — and that is possible only with dependable staffing.

“We are taking a stand,” Geitner said, “to make this change now, in order to stabilize our workforce and to take a step forward in neutralizing poverty in our community.”

About 80% of professionals who make up the Heritage Christian Services workforce identify as women, with nearly 30% of them women of color. Many are the face of the poverty challenges that currently confront our community.

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In the state of New York, people who work in the caring profession are predominantly women, people of color and immigrants. They are workers who are affected by structural racism and gender inequality. They have been on the frontlines of Covid-19, yet their compensation is well below the value of the support they provide.

“This is a social justice commitment,” Geitner said, adding, “People who choose a career that directly supports the health and well-being of others should not have to sacrifice their own well-being to do so. They deserve to earn a wage that allows them self-sufficiency.”

Frontline employees are compassionate, highly skilled care providers who ensure that every interaction affords dignity and respect to those supported by Heritage Christian Services. They are dedicated to completing complex medical tasks and medication administration, supporting behavioral health and the development of essential life skills, and ensuring a close connection for all as included members of their community. It is a worthy and essential job, one that deserves a wage far beyond minimum.

“This is a major step forward, but it is not the destination,” Geitner said. “We must work to continue the wage advancement of caring professions until we achieve a wage commensurate with their skills and dedication.”

Heritage Christian believes that multiple elements come into play around successful employment. A competitive wage is just part of a work environment that includes robust benefits, a culture of compassion and access to resources such as a success coach, which offers free consultation to staff members when they encounter barriers in their personal or professional lives.

“We are committed to welcoming new and dynamic team members,” Geitner said, “and moving the wage and keeping them engaged in the work that they do.”

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### **About Heritage Christian Services**

Heritage Christian Services, established in Rochester in 1984, strives to advance an inclusive and equitable community with programs that create robust health, wellness and self-empowerment, primarily for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. This humanitarian organization, the seventh-largest employer in the Rochester region, touches the lives of thousands of people every year in the Rochester and Buffalo Niagara regions with elements that include residential and in-home services, employment services, educational supports, child care and more. For more information, visit [HeritageChristianServices.org](http://HeritageChristianServices.org).