

Presentation to the Disability Commission

**Study of Benefits and Increased Wages
for
Personal Assistants**

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November 16, 2005

“There is nothing in the world
greater than freedom”.

These words by one of the our country's
greatest civil rights leader,
Dr. Martin Luther King.

The freedom that Dr. King spoke of is often
yet to be realized for many people with
disabilities.

Personal Assistance Services, usually called “PAS”, can give persons with significant disabilities such freedom.

PAS is a hands-on support for daily living activities

Assistance includes bathing, dressing, transferring from bed to chair, walking, eating, toilet use, grooming and activities which assist a person to work competitively

Studies show that there is much profit in the long-term care segment of the support service and health care industry.

However, sadly, many workers who provide services are often unable to obtain or pay for or obtain healthcare coverage

A decorative graphic consisting of several sets of concentric circles, resembling ripples in water, located in the bottom right corner of the slide.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates the number of home health aides and personal care assistants have increased by 53% since 1996

Kaiser Family Foundation notes that there is an estimated 50% turnover for Home Health Aides/ Personal Assistants. Factors for turnover include :

- Low wages
 - Lack of affordable health insurance/ benefits
 - Insufficient training
 - Limited opportunities/advancement
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Importantly, current research shows

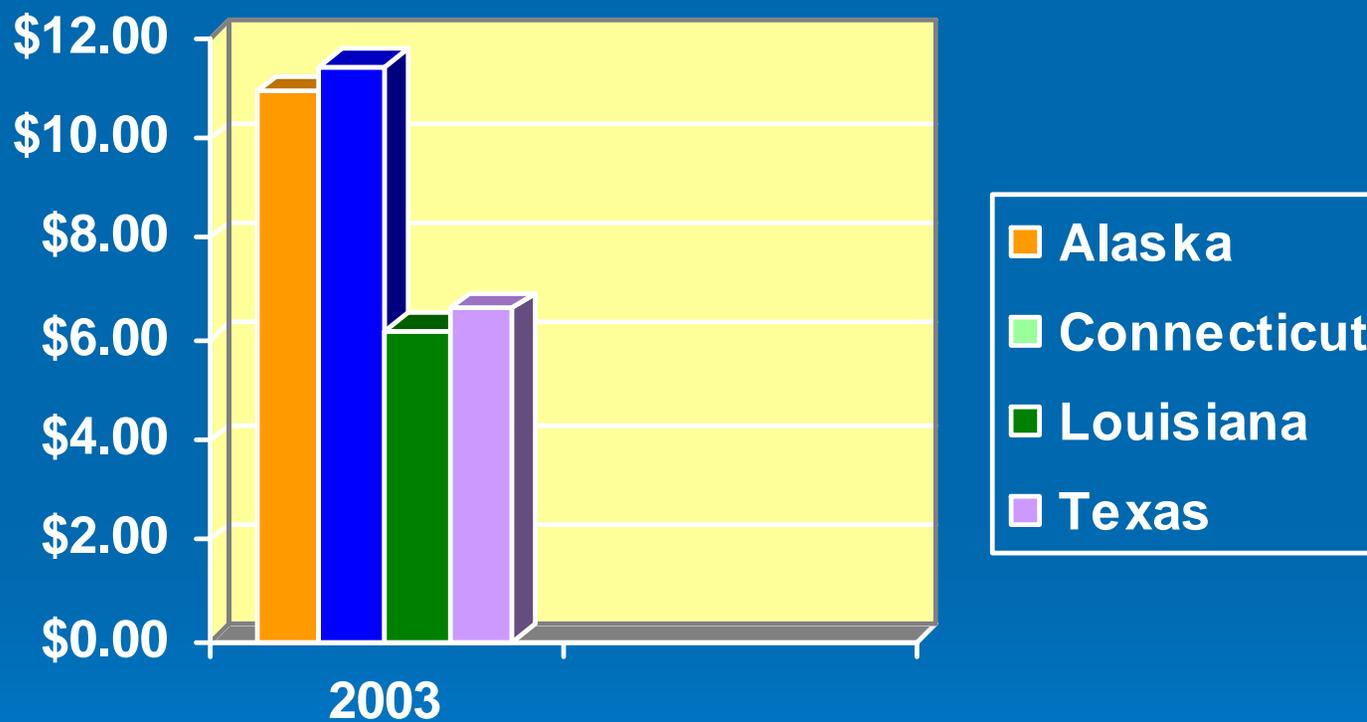
- Shift in public policy to community living
- Consideration and respect for consumer preferences .
- Changes reflect mandates of the **1999 Supreme Court's Olmstead Decision**, ensuring community living based on the *Americans with Disabilities Act*.
- Consumers are taking charge/directing their own services. Policy changes correlate with consumer/family satisfaction.

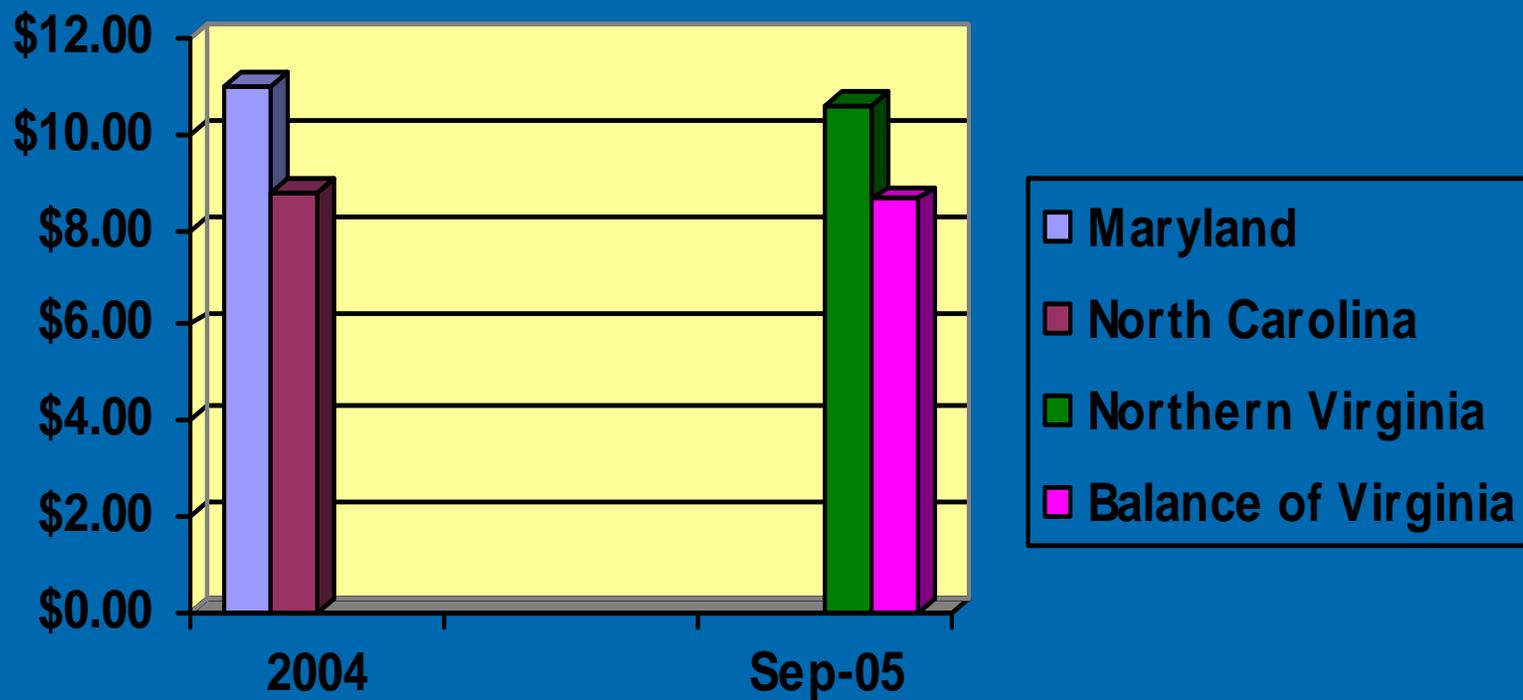
Changes in the Law/ Public Policy and the need for services have **not** shaped or driven needed changes in compensation for personal assistants

Factors attributed to this lack of forward movement include

- Funding is largely public dollars
- Wages are low for all personal care workers/lower for those working in the community
- Both national and regionally are consistently LOW

2003 National Available Wage Average





Virginia Has Barely Kept Up with the 2004 Regional Averages

Barriers exist for providing health benefits:

- Consumer is employer, not agency
- High turnover
- Wide range hours worked (10-60/week)
- Individual consumer may employ multiple personal assistants
- Costs of administering vs. direct services

As seen earlier, Virginia is below the compensation rate of Personal Assistants. Rates are currently consistent with 2003 rates in most states.

Several options may be available that would help increase the pool of qualified assistants.

Option #1 Increase base hourly rate of Personal Assistants

Example:



Base Budget	Needed Increases	Total Budget
FY 2005-06		\$ 2,953,327
2 \$ increase	\$ 671,203	\$ 3,624,531
4 \$ Increase	\$ 1,342,406	\$ 4,295,734

Option #2

Providing monthly stipends for Personal Assistants working at least 30 hours/week

Example:

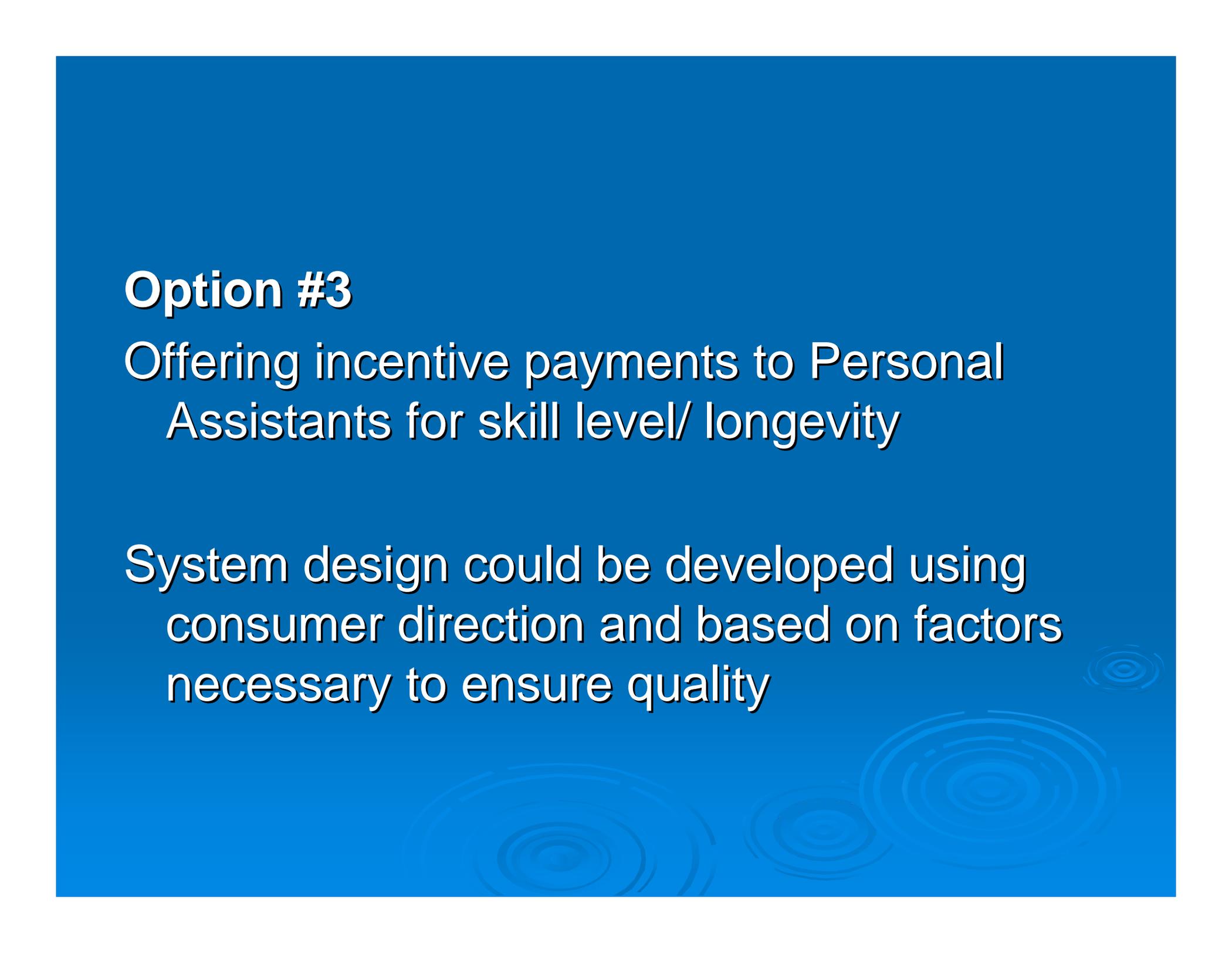
64 Personal Assistants working an average of 30 hrs a week and given a \$60 monthly stipend, would cost \$46,080 for a year.

Cost would be adjusted according to the number/amount of stipends given

Option #3

Offering incentive payments to Personal Assistants for skill level/ longevity

System design could be developed using consumer direction and based on factors necessary to ensure quality



Conclusively, the wage offer to Personal Assistants is relatively low and because no health benefits are currently offered, wages should be adjusted up

We look forward to the Disability Commission's support and direction