Direct care workers should receive high risk duty pay

The majority of individuals who reside at State Supported Living Centers and state hospitals require 24 hour supervision provided by the direct care staff at these facilities. A significant number of these individuals who require close monitoring have severe intellectual and psychological disabilities that sometime result in aggressive if not violent behavior. Attending to the needs of individuals at SSLC/ State Hospitals is the top priority for state workers in these facilities. However, in the process of meeting those needs direct care staff are often exposed to additional hazards on the job.

Individuals with extensive, pervasive, and pervasive plus needs account for more than 57% of the residential populations in SSLC's and State Hospitals. Because of this high level of need combined with a high turnover rate of direct care staff, and frequent staffing shortages, SSLC's and state hospitals experience very high rates of injury. The Austin American Statesman reported that worker's compensation claims in state hospitals are up 40 percent, rising from 448 in 2008 to 629 in 2012, and that incidents of violence at all of the state-run hospitals have increased 22 percent since 2008, rising from 2,700 to 3,300 in fiscal year 2012.

Injury Frequency Rates for DADS and DSHS compared with Agencies with Staff Receiving Hazardous Duty

Agency	2013	2014	2015
Dept of Aging and Disability Svcs	9.35%	8.86%	8.46%
Dept of State Health Services	6.49%	7.11%	6.49%
Juvenile Justice Dept	15.77%	18.66%	19.71%
Dept of Criminal Justice	4.62%	4.57%	4.59%
Dept of Public Safety	4.41%	4.47%	4.66%
Facilities Commission	2.25%	2.50%	-
Alcoholic Beverage Comm	3.16%	2.38%	2.15%
Parks and Wildlife Dept	3.35%	3.90%	5.60%

To attract and retain qualified, experienced, dedicated staff, TSEU is proposing that direct care workers in State Hospitals and SSLC's be eligible for high risk duty pay.