

## National Domestic Workers Alliance and Care In Action: What Donors Need to Know

The National Domestic Workers Alliance (NDWA) has worked since 2007 to find, educate, and organize a mostly invisible workforce – [the estimated 2.2 million people](#), mostly women of color, who provide professional domestic work in other people’s homes. Care In Action, which was founded in 2017 and includes both a 501(c)(4) arm and PAC, has the broader goal of engaging Black and other women of color in electoral politics. Together, the two organizations have become a powerful force for change.

NDWA organizes and advocates in partnership with domestic workers, including smaller organizations representing them, across the U.S., while Care In Action is focused on endorsing and electing progressive Black and women of color in seven key states: Arizona, Georgia, Nevada, North and South Carolina, Michigan, and Virginia.

This brief answers questions for prospective donors about NDWA and Care In Action’s strategies, impact and organizational health. The answers below are drawn from independent research and interviews or contacts with related organizations, including smaller groups working to organize domestic workers, and information provided by both groups.

NDWA and Care In Action are reaching and activating key, overlapping constituencies that are all too frequently overlooked. Blue Tent **strongly recommends** that donors support both organizations. We suggest that giving to Care in Action should be a **high priority** right now, given the urgency of the group’s electoral work in crucial swing states and the ability of smaller donors to have a real impact by supporting this work. Giving to NDWA should be a **priority**.

### What are its core strategies?

Domestic workers – including nannies, housecleaners, and home healthcare providers – play an essential role in homes across the United States. But they have historically been undervalued and often exploited. Many lack basic labor protections, and they are far more likely to live in poverty than other workers. A large share are immigrants.

NDWA organizes these workers to learn about their rights under state and federal law and advocate for greater protections using strategies including direct lobbying of elected

representatives; phone campaigns; and demonstrations. The group has also provided expert testimony on the local, state and federal levels from both domestic workers and its own experts. NDWA's strategies combine in-person outreach and relationship-building as well as social media platforms and services like WhatsApp that allow domestic professionals to engage in the movement from the privacy of their own phones.

On the electoral side, Care In Action helps find and elevate candidates for state and federal office, endorses candidates who support the organization's goals, and then backs up those endorsements with substantive action – such as helping elect senators Raphael Warnock and Jon Ossoff by contacting nearly six million voters and knocking on [more than a million doors in Georgia in 2020](#).

### **What are the strengths and weaknesses of those strategies?**

NDWA counts 70 grassroots chapters and affiliate organizations in 21 states – including some of Care In Action's priority states (Arizona, Georgia, North Carolina, and Virginia) – and it has built an online community of more than a quarter-million people. This base of support combined with a decade and a half of teaching domestic workers how to advocate for themselves potentially provides Care In Action with a ready-made “bench” of empowered domestic workers able to create and implement everything from GOTV efforts to running and winning campaigns for elected office.

The fact that domestic professionals are overwhelmingly women of color themselves means that NDWA's base is also well-situated for relational organizing within the wider community of Black and other women of color. NDWA itself leans heavily into person-to-person organizing; founder and President [Ai-jen Poo began organizing domestic professionals](#) in New York City by finding and talking with them in the places where they were already gathered, and today the organization urges members to promote voting by [contacting three of their friends or family](#) and asking those people if they plan to vote. Care In Action also prioritizes the kind of in-person work, like canvassing, that centers person-to-person contact.

The constituencies mobilized by NDWA and Care In Action traditionally face real hurdles in taking political action. Domestic professionals in the U.S. [aren't covered by laws](#) that protect other workers' rights to assemble or to form a union. Many are undocumented immigrants. Systemic racism and voter suppression in Republican-led states make political action more of a challenge

for all Black and other voters of color, while low-wage voters in particular, including BIPOC voters, have little to no job security. While these hurdles may make NDWA and Care In Action's work more difficult, eliminating or at least substantially reducing them is also a vitally necessary step toward creating real change for these workers.

### **Is it a top leader in its space—or have the potential to be?**

NDWA is most definitely *the* leading and largest organization working with and on behalf of domestic workers in the U.S. Other groups working in the same arena – including Hand In Hand (a network of domestic worker employers that advocates for better pay and conditions); AFSME Local 3930 Union of Domestic Workers; and Working Washington – are either active in a much smaller number of states or are limited in scope to a single state.

Care In Action, on the other hand, is one of a number of organizations seeking to promote political participation by Black people, Black women, or women of color more generally. But thanks to its scope and the boost it receives from its association with NDWA, Care In Action is the leading organization dedicated specifically to endorsing, and electing, progressive Black and other women of color. Another, newer organization, She the People, which like Care In Action is focused entirely on electing Black and other women of color, attracted eight of the then-19 Democratic presidential candidates to its 2019 forum and as of this writing [has endorsed eight candidates in four states](#). Another similar group, [Women of Color for Progress](#), is limited to New York City.

### **What is its track record of achieving its goals?**

For its debut, Care In Action endorsed Stacey Adams' 2018 gubernatorial campaign and was part of a Georgia voter mobilization effort that reportedly left "[no door unknocked](#)," with Care In Action reporting that it texted every woman of color who was registered to vote in the state. Since then, the group has enjoyed steady success. Care In Action was one of the organizations that helped flip the Virginia state legislature in 2019, reporting nearly 2.5 million voter contact attempts. In 2020, a majority of its endorsed candidates won, and it achieved a million or more voter contacts, during its first year in five new states. In 2021, in an otherwise notably bad year in that state for Democrats, Care In Action's 13 endorsed candidates for Virginia's House of Delegates won 10 of their races – though its endorsed candidate for Governor, Jennifer McClellan, lost to then Gov. Northam in the primary.

NDWA also has a strong and growing record of impact. When COVID struck in 2020, for example, NDWA went to work raising and distributing cash payments to domestic workers who were being laid off or fired in droves. The initial goal for the Coronavirus Care fund was \$4 million; **NDWA raised more than \$30 million**. Prior to that effort, NDWA's work helped lead to the passage of domestic worker bill of rights legislation in 10 states, beginning with New York in 2010. More recently, in 2021 alone three states (New Mexico, New York, and North Carolina) and four cities including Houston, TX passed laws or local ordinances favorable to domestic professionals. On the federal level, NDWA is one of many organizations, and Democratic lawmakers including the president, whose efforts to pass the Build Back Better Act (which included provisions to raise pay and improve working conditions for domestic professionals) were killed by West Virginia Senator Joe Manchin.

### **Is its financial house in order?**

Yes. In 2012, NDWA's 990 provided by ProPublica's Nonprofit explorer reported total assets of \$1.6 million; as of 2019 that had grown to \$20.5 million. NDWA told Blue Tent that, for 2022, the organization has a budget of just under \$25 million, with \$15 million of that committed so far. NDWA's 2019 audited financial statement shows an organization heavily dependent on restricted funds, most likely from foundations and major donors. This could potentially leave the organization vulnerable should the large funders on which it depends change their priorities, but for the foreseeable future NDWA is in a solid position.

As a much newer organization, Care In Action understandably has a much smaller budget. Its c4 reported revenue of \$5 million for 2019 and during the 2020 cycle, Open Secrets reports the PAC as having a budget of \$1.1 million, the vast majority of which came from just four sources: Democracy PAC, two private individuals, and Defeat by Tweet.

While that's a relatively low figure, Care In Action seems to be replicating its founding organization's financial growth. Care In Action told Blue Tent that the organization's c4 budget for 2022 is \$8.5 million, while it projects a budget for the PAC of \$4 million, or nearly quadruple the money it spent just two years ago.

### **Does it collaborate well and is it respected by its peers?**

Yes. Sources consulted by Blue Tent praised both NDWA and Care in Action for practices including hiring local organizers from among local communities; being an organization that

doesn't over-promise, and does give advance notice when changing circumstances (for example, the COVID pandemic) prevent the organization from being able to meet previous commitments; and creating strong relationships with both partner organizations and the legislators in the states in which it operates. One source raised a concern saying that, in their state, it seemed that Care In Action was more focused on working with legislators than with building a base; if accurate, that concern could be explained by the fact that 2020 was the first year Care In Action operated in that state.

### **Does it have strong leadership and governance?**

Yes. NDWA founding Executive Director Ai-jen Poo, who also leads Care In Action as a senior advisor, has accumulated accolades including a 2014 MacArthur "Genius" Award and recognition as one of Time Magazine's 100 Most Influential People in the World. She is an author and nationally-recognized expert on issues ranging from family and elder care to grassroots organizing.

In April, NDWA expanded its leadership with the elevation of former NDWA Chief of Staff Jen Stowe to the ED position. Stowe, the granddaughter of a domestic worker, has previously worked as Deputy Executive Director at Priorities USA and also for Planned Parenthood Federation of America. Poo is moving into a new position with NDWA, as president of the coalition, and both women will serve Care In Action as senior advisors. Both NDWA and Care In Action have all-female leadership teams made up almost entirely of women of color. NDWA's board is largely elected from among the organization's affiliates and councils of domestic workers, while the Care In Action staff has a broad range of experience in advocacy and issue and electoral organizing with a racial justice lens.

### **Does it have clear and realistic plans for the future?**

Yes. During a February 2022 interview, Poo told Blue Tent "shoring up the organization," including its internal systems and processes, compliance procedures, and "all the things that allow for us to be a well-oiled collective of movement organizations," has been her major focus during 2021 and the first months of 2022. In addition to expanding NDWA's leadership structure with the addition of Stowe, plans include naming a new executive director of Care In Action. "We've spent the last 14 months institutionalizing," Poo said, so that both organizations' growth will be sustainable.

## Conclusion

The National Domestic Workers Alliance is a solid organization with a track record of success that's all the more impressive because of the intense hurdles involved in organizing the “invisible” workforce of mostly BIPOC women and immigrants who work in the privacy of others’ homes. Care In Action has helped win elections since its inception. Blue Tent **strongly recommends** NDWA and suggests that smaller donors view the group as a **priority**. We also **strongly recommend** Care In Action while suggesting it be a **high priority** for donors given the urgency of its electoral work in key states and because modest donations will have a much greater impact on this newer, smaller organization.

### You may also want to check out:

- [Working Families Party: What Donors Need to Know](#)
- [Sister District Project: What Donors Need to Know](#)
- [Economic Policy Institute: What Donors Need to Know](#)
- [Midwest Academy: What Donors Need to Know](#)

