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## **Human services workers await pay raises**

By: Madeleine Rivera

*Thousands of people who work in the human services industry in Massachusetts are waiting for pay raises after the Patrick administration decided to delay them. YNN's Madeleine Rivera has more on this story.*

PITTSFIELD, Mass. -- They were supposed to come before Christmas, a season generally thought of as a time for giving.

"Especially at this time of year. It's difficult with the holidays coming up," said Erin Manson, a staff worker at the Berkshire County Arc.

But now, thousands of human service workers are waiting to see if they'll be given a raise.

"With the fiscal economy the way it is right now, I can honestly say this is the first time in my life that I have struggled," said Janine Sniezek, a disabilities caseworker at the United Cerebral Palsy of Berkshire County.

The legislature voted to give a total of \$20 million in pay raises to human service providers who work a lot with disabled people, seniors and veterans. But because of lower tax revenues, the governor took some precautionary measures. This put a hold on salary increases for more than 29,000 people in the commonwealth.

"The raise was for anyone who made under \$40,000. All human service workers that fall under the EOHHS, the Executive Office of Health and Human Services. They're the ones that we're talking about," said Ken Singer, executive director of Berkshire County Arc.

The average salary for this line of work is about \$25,000. The pay increase from the administration would be about 33 cents per hour.

"Anything would be some sort of help," said Sniezek.

Berkshire County Arc has over 600 employees, many of who would have been eligible for a pay raise. A lot of these workers have not had a pay increase in about five years.

"I just think it's really a shame because the people in this field work very hard. It's not a 9 to 5, five day a week job. I mean, I'm basically on call 24/7," said Sniezek.

A spokesperson from the Executive Office of Health and Human Services said no decision has been made. The governor will continue to review the budget in the coming weeks.