



MEMORANDUM

FROM: Richie Farran, V.P. of Government Services, Health Care Association of Michigan
DATE: July 6, 2021
SUBJECT: Addressing Health Care Workforce Challenges

Michigan's skilled nursing facilities have experienced the most difficult year in the history of the profession. The dedicated caregivers in these facilities performed admirably during the pandemic, highlighting that serving seniors is truly a calling. Unfortunately, COVID-19 has resulted in worsening the already severe workforce challenges facing the profession.

While sectors across the economy face similar challenges, the workforce shortage in the health care sector, and long-term care specifically, is uniquely challenging. The nursing facility profession is one of people caring for people – good staff produces positive outcomes. Michigan is aging, and the demand for caregivers will continue to grow.

The difficulties over the past year have regrettably driven administrators, directors of nursing, and front line staff out of the profession at a time when they are needed most. Rather than vilifying these selfless individuals, they should be celebrated for the service they provide to Michigan's seniors.

The need to bolster attraction and retention efforts to the health care sector parallel the impetus behind Speaker Jason Wentworth's initiatives for law enforcement officers announced in May 13 of this year. HCAM is hopeful the same commitment can be made to attract and retain a strong workforce tasked with caring for our state's most vulnerable population.

Below are a combination of appropriations, policy, and marketing initiatives that can be undertaken to help support attraction and retention efforts in the health care sector.

Financial assistance:

- Provide student loan forgiveness for licensed health care professionals who are new graduates and work in long term care.
- Develop assistance programs for caregivers like housing down payments and childcare.
- Provide career ladder scholarships to encourage staff to become a registered nurse.
- Funding for universities who have shown graduation rates with direct correlation to long term care hires with retention of two years or more.
- Continue the \$2.25/hour direct care worker wage increase.
- Restore the Earned Income Tax Credit.

Policy solutions:

- Create a pathway for temporary nurse aides allowed by the current Public Health Emergency to become registered certified nurse aides. HCAM is working with Representative Ann Bollin on legislation.
- Ensure access to Nurse Aide Training Programs and Nurse Aide Exams to eliminate the barriers to registry as a CNA. HCAM is working with Representative Ann Bollin on legislation.
- Allow for reciprocity for RN, LPN, CNA, and therapists by adopting policies including the Nurse Licensure Compact.
- Establish a career ladder for front line caregivers, including the establishment of a medication aide registry in the state. HCAM is working with Representative Ben Frederick on HB 4316 to establish a medication aide registry.
- Establish a work study program to give people an opportunity to consider a career in long-term care.
- Include certified nurse aides as part of the state's workforce development efforts, including Michigan Works.
- Fund marketing for recruitment into the long-term care profession.
- Ensure a fair, efficient regulatory process that seeks to support front line caregivers and facility leaders rather than driving them from the profession. HCAM is currently working with LARA on improvements to the statute outlining the nursing facility survey process that will need legislative approval.
- Provide mental health and other support services to caregivers who are experiencing burnout from an already arduous profession made even more difficult by the pandemic.
- Establish a non-traditional LPN School to supplement current options to ensure access to education programs for individuals seeking licensure as an LPN.

We look forward to working with the legislature on implementing policies to attract and retain caregivers to long-term care. If you have any questions or would like to discuss these proposals in greater detail, please do not hesitate to contact me at 517-627-1561 or via email at RichFarran@hcam.org. Your time and consideration are much appreciated.

HCAM is a statewide trade association representing proprietary, not for profit, county medical and hospital-based long-term skilled nursing and rehabilitation facilities.