**Arguments against 24 hour RN Coverage & Responses**

**Argument #1:** Nursing homes in rural areas of states would have difficulty finding enough RNs for 24-hour coverage.

**Response:** Thirteen states already require the twenty-four hour presence of a RN within nursing homes. Nursing homes in the vast majority of these states have not had an issue complying with this requirement, even in rural areas. Some states have established a waiver for facilities in rural areas, and I am happy to pass on this potential recommendation if you believe it would be helpful. However, nursing home residents located in rural areas deserve the same quality of care that residents living in more populated areas may receive – their care needs are just as high, and these needs require the 24 hour presence of a RN.

**Argument #2**: Providing RN coverage round-the-clock, while a good policy, would be too costly to actually implement.

**Response:** It is likely it would save money in the long-run to have the 24 hour presence of a RN within our nation’s nursing homes. Not having a RN present 24 hours a day leads to poorer health outcomes and unnecessary hospitalizations, which place large costs on our nation’s health care system. A February 2014 study by the Office of Inspector General found that nearly 60% of all adverse events that occur in nursing homes to Medicare beneficiaries were preventable and caused an estimated cost of $2.8 billion in unnecessary hospitalization costs to the Medicare program in 2011. This large cost only pertains to Medicare beneficiaries, who are a small percentage of the individuals in our nation’s nursing homes. The overall cost of poor care is likely much higher. One key component of preventing poor care and decreasing adverse events is through the presence of a RN round the clock. Any costs related to hiring additional RNs would likely be offset by reducing unnecessary hospitalizations and other costs associated with poorer health outcomes. For instance, the $2.8 billion in unnecessary hospitalizations costs to the Medicare program in 2011 alone would pay for two RNs per facility – the number needed to provide 24-hour RN coverage.[[1]](#endnote-1)

**Argument #3:** Facilities should have the freedom to staff based on what the facility’s needs are. Maybe some facilities don’t need 24 hour RN presence to adequately care for residents and LPNs and CNAs can provide sufficient round-the-clock care.

**Response:** We know that individuals are entering into nursing homes quicker and sicker. The care needs of nursing home residents have become more acute over time. While Certified Nursing Assistants (CNAs) and Licensed Practical Nurses (LPNs) play critical roles in caring for nursing home residents, they do not have the licensure or education to properly assess, diagnose or report a resident’s medical condition. These are critical tasks that only a RN can do, and with the increasing care needs of nursing home residents, access to such services is needed round-the-clock.

1. Salary and benefits were calculated using Bureau of Labor Statistics data which reported the average annual salary for an RN was $67,930 in 2012 plus benefit estimates of $5,197 = $73,127. The number of facilities used in this calculation was 15,673. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)