

Support NH Staffing Act

November 14, 2003

NCCNHR Urges Representatives to Co-Sponsor Rep. Waxman's Nursing Home Staffing Act

The National Citizens' Coalition for Nursing Home Reform is urging members of the House of Representatives to co-sponsor the Nursing Home Staffing Act of 2003 (HR 3355), introduced by Rep. Henry Waxman of California. HR 3355 establishes minimum nurse staffing standards that would improve care in more than 90 percent of nursing homes that do not have the level of licensed nurses and nursing assistants identified in government reports as necessary to provide adequate care.

On November 4, the National Academy of Sciences' Institute of Medicine (IOM) issued a report that warns of the negative effects of understaffing and nurse fatigue on resident safety. Based on extensive research, *Keeping Patients Safe : Transforming the Work Environment of Nurses* recommends that the federal government "specify minimum standards for registered and licensed nurse staffing in nursing homes." Specifically, the IOM report recommends that staffing requirements be based on the Department of Health and Human Services' 2002 report to Congress, *Appropriateness of Minimum Nurse Staffing Ratios in Nursing Homes*. HR 3355 would establish minimum staffing standards based on the DHHS findings endorsed by the IOM.

Staffing has consistently been linked to the quality of care provided in nursing homes, and HR 3355 effectively addresses this correlation by requiring nursing facilities to provide a total of 4.1 hours of direct care per resident per day. The DHHS study found that staffing below this level may compromise the quality of care, causing costly, dangerous outcomes such as pressure sores, infections, and avoidable hospitalizations. The bill provides additional resources to be used towards compliance and financial accountability to ensure funds are spent as intended.

A companion bill, S. 1988, has been introduced in the Senate by Senator John Edwards of North Carolina

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