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### **Legislation Requiring Round-the-Clock RN Coverage Introduced in Congress: A Step Towards Better Nursing Home Care**

WASHINGTON, DC, August 4<sup>th</sup>, 2014 – The National Consumer Voice for Quality Long-Term Care (Consumer Voice) applauds the introduction of [H.R. 5373](#), the *Put a Registered Nurse in the Nursing Home Act*, introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives by Congresswoman Jan Schakowsky on July 31st. The bill would require all nursing homes receiving Medicare and/or Medicaid reimbursement to have a registered nurse (RN) on duty twenty-four hours per day, seven days a week. Although most people believe RNs are already required round-the-clock, this is not the case. Under current federal law, nursing homes are only required to have a RN eight hours each day regardless of facility size – no matter how many residents they have or how sick they are.

Registered nurses play a critical role in the nursing home. RNs are the only nurses in a nursing home that can assess a resident's condition. The absence of RN staffing for up to 16 hours each day means there is no one present capable of assessing and responding when residents' medical conditions suddenly change or deteriorate. When not properly assessed, changes in condition can have serious and even fatal consequences. In addition, residents are entering nursing homes from hospitals "quicker and sicker," and their overall care needs have increased over time. They require a high level of nursing skill and knowledge to anticipate, identify and respond to changes in condition, ensure appropriate rehabilitation and maximize the chances for a safe and timely discharge. Residents don't just have these needs between 8 am and 4 pm during the week – this level of oversight and care is needed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Consumer Voice and other long-term care advocacy organizations have long advocated for a RN round-the clock. Research has shown that higher RN staffing levels in nursing homes directly result in improved care outcomes, such as lower antipsychotic use, fewer pressure ulcers, less restraint use and cognitive decline, fewer urinary tract infections and catheterizations, less weight loss and less decrease in function. Higher RN staffing is also essential to prevent the unnecessary hospitalization of nursing home residents, which can have devastating consequences to residents and place a high amount of preventable costs upon our nation's health care system.

According to Richard Gelula, Executive Director of the Consumer Voice, "[H.R. 5373](#), the *Put a Registered Nurse in the Nursing Home Act*, is a simple and straight-forward solution that will help improve the quality of long-term care within our nation's nursing homes. We have long known that the current federal requirement of eight hours of RN presence per day is woefully inadequate to meet residents' care needs and applaud Congresswoman Schakowsky for her leadership on this crucial policy change."

Advocacy for H.R. 5373 is part of the Consumer Voice's Nursing Home Staffing Campaign. To learn more about the Campaign or to join, go to [www.theconsumervoice.org/betterstaffing](http://www.theconsumervoice.org/betterstaffing).

**About the Consumer Voice:** The National Consumer Voice for Quality Long-Term Care was formed as the National Citizens' Coalition for Nursing Home Reform in 1975 because of public concern about substandard care in nursing homes. Today, the Consumer Voice is the leading national voice representing consumers on issues related to long-term care, helping to ensure that consumers are empowered to advocate for themselves.