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New Report Details Lack of Adequate Staffing Standards in Nursing Homes

Only One State Meets Recommended Minimums for Staff and 24/7 RN

**Press Briefing with Experts Thursday, December 9th at 1:00 pm eastern/10:00
am pacific**

Register Here: https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_IZ319yhDRt27d2sA3GljwA

Who:

Lori Smetanka, executive director of The National Consumer Voice for Quality Long Term Care
Robyn Grant, director of public policy and advocacy at The National Consumer Voice for
Quality Long Term Care

Dr. Charlene Harrington, Ph.D., RN, Professor Emerita at the University of California
San Francisco

Richard Mollot, executive director of The Long Term Care Community Coalition

Washington, DC -- Chronic understaffing has been a serious problem in nursing homes for decades, and has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. The problem has reached crisis proportions in thousands of facilities across the country.

A new report by the National Consumer Voice for Quality Long-Term Care (Consumer Voice) documented staffing standards in each state, analyzing the contrast to research-based standards recommended by medical and healthcare professionals to ensure quality of care.

“The lack of adequate staffing standards at the state and federal levels contributes to lower quality of care and poor health outcomes for residents of nursing homes,” Lori Smetanka, executive director of the National Consumer Voice for Quality Long Term Care.

A landmark report on staffing in 2001 for the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) identified a “recommended staffing standard” of 4.1 hours per resident of daily total direct care nursing time. Research conducted for the study found staffing levels falling below this minimum put nursing home residents at risk. Three Institute of Medicine studies have recommended at least one registered nurse (RN) be on duty 24/7.

Despite these recommendations, there remains no federal statute nor regulation requiring a minimum staffing standard or round the clock RN, nor is there any requirement for a specific ratio of nursing staff to residents.

Charlene Harrington, Professor Emeritus at the University of California San Francisco said, “The relationship between nurse and caregiver staffing levels and outcomes for residents of long term care facilities is well documented. Not surprisingly, higher levels of total staffing are associated with higher quality of care. Inadequate staffing can result in higher mortality, decreased physical functioning, increased antibiotic use, more pressure ulcers, catheterization, urinary tract infections, higher hospitalization rates, weight loss, dehydration, improper and overuse of antipsychotics.”

Report author and director of public policy and advocacy at The National Consumer Voice for Quality Long Term Care, Robyn Grant, commented on the findings: “Weak federal staffing requirements combined with woefully inadequate state standards can lead to dangerously low staffing levels and deadly consequences for residents.”

Key findings:

- With one exception - the District of Columbia - state standards for total nursing staff time fall short of research-backed recommended staffing standards
- 29 states have minimum requirements that are significantly lower than research-based recommended staffing standards; two states -Montana and Arizona - require less than 2 hours per resident day
- Only six states require a RN 24/7 at all facilities

See [report summary](#) and [full report](#) for detailed findings.

The pandemic has been devastating to residents of long-term care facilities and their loved ones. Over 186,000 residents and staff have died from COVID-19; countless more suffered from isolation and neglect.

The House-passed Build Back Better plan includes the most significant improvements in protections for nursing home residents in decades, measures that will help ensure the tragic events of the COVID-19 pandemic do not recur.

Provisions included in the House-passed Build Back Better would:

- Require nursing homes to have a registered nurse on staff 24 hours per day
- Result in a study of staffing in nursing homes and the implementation of a federal minimum staffing standard
- Increase oversight and enforcement in nursing homes
- Require increased scrutiny of data submitted to the federal government by nursing homes
- Result in more accountability for how nursing homes spend billions of taxpayer dollars they receive each year.

Smetanka called on the Senate to include these protections in its version of Build Back Better:

“The for-profit nursing home industry is intensely fighting provisions to require at least one registered nurse (RN) 24 hours a day, and to increase minimum staffing standards. Long-term care providers receive billions of dollars in public funds to provide care from Medicare, Medicaid, and supplemental government payouts. Yet there is a lack of transparency and accountability for how they spend that money, or whether adequate amounts go toward the provision of care - the only thing that really matters to residents.

We are asking the Senate to include these provisions that would improve the quality of care and enhance the transparency needed to account for the use of public funds, including more than \$4 billion in additional funding to assist with recruitment, training, and retention of staff.

It should be a wake up call that the very industry being paid to care for residents of nursing homes is fighting measures to improve the lives of the residents in their facilities. We call on the nursing home industry to support these important provisions that will enhance the care and quality of life for residents.”

The Consumer Voice is the leading national voice representing consumers in issues related to long-term care, helping to ensure that consumers are empowered to advocate for themselves. We are a primary source of information and tools for consumers, families, caregivers, advocates and ombudsmen to help ensure quality care for the individual.