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Nursing Home Workers to Join “Fight for \$15” to Raise Wages, Improve Quality of Care

*New [report from PHI](#) finds 1 in 3 nursing assistants relies on public assistance,
“care gap” worsening for baby boomers*

WASHINGTON, D.C.—Seizing the momentum from recent New York and California laws that established a \$15 state minimum wage, nursing home workers will be joining actions from Florida to California to unite with other nursing home workers this Thursday, April 14, to call for a \$15 an hour wage.

As the national movement of fast-food, child care, home care and airport workers grows, nursing home workers—among the most underpaid working women and men in the country—are joining to stand up to corporate greed and to call for fair wages and quality care for seniors and people with disabilities who depend upon nursing home care.

Nearly 5,000 Pennsylvania nursing home workers won a path to a \$15 hourly wage last week through their union. Thousands of nursing home workers in more than 40 cities in 16 states will be joining actions this week as part of the Fight for \$15. Events include:

- **Florida:** 2,000 nursing home workers will go on strike at 19 Consulate Healthcare facilities in Altamonte Springs, Brooksville, Cape Coral, Hollywood, Kissimmee, Lake Mary, North Fort Myers, Miami, Orlando, Palm Coast, Palm Bay, South Daytona, St. Cloud, Titusville, Venice, West Palm Beach—the largest healthcare strike in the Southeast in more than a decade.
- **Illinois:** Nursing home workers will be holding a candlelight vigil Wednesday, April 13, on the Northside of Chicago followed by a march. Workers will be participating in a series of rallies Thursday, April 14, outside Loyola University, area McDonald’s and nursing homes.
- **Pennsylvania:** At actions in Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, Allentown, Beaver, Erie, Harrisburg, Johnstown, Scranton and Washington, SEIU Healthcare Pennsylvania members will celebrate winning a path to \$15 at their respective Golden Living, Genesis and Oak Health nursing homes and call for a fair wage for all working people.
- **Ohio:** Nursing home workers will be joining together to make a historic announcement in Cleveland to “make poverty history.”
- **California:** Hundreds of nursing home workers will join actions in Los Angeles, Sacramento, Riverside and Oakland.
- **More events will be held** in Connecticut, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, New Jersey, New York, Rhode Island, Washington, West Virginia and Wisconsin

Kim White, a certified nursing assistant (CNA) at a nursing home near Orlando, will be one of the Consulate workers going on strike Thursday. “We help the people we care for with their most basic needs, like bathing and dressing, preparing the food they eat, and keeping their living environment clean, but can’t afford the basics for our own families,” said White. “I have to work so much overtime to provide for my son that there’s not enough time to spend actually parenting.”

According to the Paraprofessional Health Institute (PHI) report, "[Raise the Floor: Quality Nursing Home Care Depends on Quality Jobs](#)" released today, nursing assistants and workers providing laundry, food and housekeeping services are underpaid, often viewed "as a cost to be managed rather than an asset to invest." Keeping the wage floor low leads to 50 percent of nursing home workers leaving their positions each year and adds to the dramatically growing gap in available trained long term care providers.

"Over the years, the demands of my job and the number of nursing home residents I was taking care of kept increasing, but the pay wasn't keeping up," said Maribel Rodriguez, who has worked as a CNA for 29 years. "Nursing home chains, not unlike McDonald's and other corporations, keep wages low to make their profits higher instead of investing in those of us who actually provide direct care. That's why we're standing up for better quality jobs for all workers—and we're winning."

Findings from the PHI report include:

- **91 percent of nursing assistants are women; 53 percent are people of color.**
- **Wages of nursing assistants have largely remained stagnant at a median hourly wage of \$11.51 and annual earnings of \$19,000.** When inflation is factored in, real wages for CNAs have decreased by 7 percent in the last decade.
- **1 in 3 CNAs relies on taxpayer-funded public benefits** such as food stamps, energy assistance or Medicaid.
- **Low pay, insufficient staffing levels, high injury rates, and limited on-the job support contribute to high turnover and difficulties in recruiting qualified workers.**
- **The average turnover for nursing assistants exceeded 50 percent in 2012** and the rate is expected to climb as there are more opportunities for higher-paying jobs with better working conditions.
- **More than 1.3 million older Americans and people with disabilities currently reside in nursing homes** and the rapidly aging baby boomer population will create an explosive demand for long term care services.
- **10,000 women and men turn 65 every day,** and the number of older Americans in greatest need of 24-hour care in a nursing home setting—women and men over the age of 85—is poised to nearly triple by 2050.

To recruit and retain CNAs to provide quality care to more acutely ill nursing home residents, PHI recommends that workers receive higher pay, full-time hours with consistent scheduling, strengthened training standards, and opportunities for career advancement.

To read a summary of "Raise the Floor: Quality Nursing Home Care Depends on Quality Jobs," or to download the full report go to: www.phinational.org/raisethefloor.

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The Service Employees International Union (SEIU) unites 2 million diverse members in the United States, Canada and Puerto Rico. SEIU members working in the healthcare industry, public sector and property services believe in the power of joining together on the job to win higher wages and benefits and to create better communities while fighting for a more just society and an economy that works for all of us, not just corporations and the wealthy.

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