



To: Rep. Brenda Landwehr, Chair and Members, House Health and Human Services Committee

From: Rachel Monger, President/CEO, LeadingAge Kansas

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LeadingAge Kansas is the state association for not-for-profit and faith-based aging services. We have 160 member organizations across Kansas, which include not-for-profit nursing homes, retirement communities, hospital long-term care units, assisted living, homes plus, senior housing, low-income housing, home health agencies, home and community-based service programs, PACE and Meals on Wheels. Our members serve more than 25,000 older Kansans each day and employ more than 20,000 people across the state.

Testimony in Support of House Bill 2049

LeadingAge Kansas stands in support of HB 2049, and the philosophy behind reducing unnecessary licensure and certification barriers in Kansas.

Certified nurse aides are an invention of the Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services. CMS created this category of worker in federal regulation to serve as direct care workers in nursing homes, and established the standards by which each state must administer CNA training programs. Kansas chose to set its CNA training at fifteen hours higher than the federal standard. We do not know the reason why Kansas decided that 90 hours was needed for an ideal training program.

CMS believes that 75 hours is a reasonable, adequate and safe number of training hours for a certified nurse aide. CMS is notoriously heavy-handed in its regulation of nursing homes, and known for the onerous rules it sets for states to follow. We have no reason to believe that in this very narrow part of our regulations, CMS suddenly took a laissez-faire attitude toward caregiver training and established dangerous standards for states to use when training nurse aides.

As already stated, we agree with the philosophy behind this bill – at a time when workers are scarce, the state of Kansas should not be putting up regulatory and licensing barriers that are any steeper than absolutely needed. CMS set the Certified Nurse Aide training standard at 75 hours, and Kansas should follow suit.

We need workers and we need them as quickly as possible. There is no magic bullet to our workforce crisis, if there were, we wouldn't be in a crisis. Reducing regulatory and licensing barriers is one important ingredient in the recipe for workforce development. We need it, alongside adequate funding, and new avenues to get people through our doors such as apprenticeships and career ladders and lattices. Government cannot solve all our problems, but there are very specific areas where we need the Legislature's help in having tough conversations around regulatory burdens, and making tough decisions about what is necessary in a world that is so far from the ideal.

We appreciate the opportunity to offer our voice in support of HB 2049 and commonsense approaches to workforce development in Kansas.