***Long Term Care’s Workforce Crisis is Most Critical in Healthcare; Hinders Access to Essential Services***

Although staffing shortages have impacted the economy broadly, conditions have been the worst for long term care residential providers, whose staffing levels have not yet rebounded to pre-pandemic levels. Ambulatory healthcare employment is 2.0% higher than January 2020 and hospital employment is at 98.1% of January 2020 levels, but long-term care residential nursing employment has shrunk to 87.8%, with no sign of a measurable recovery yet.

Long term care providers are committed to providing quality care for extended periods of time at great expense even as residents exhaust assets and their care needs change. The forced decision of long term care providers to halt or curtail admissions while addressing the staffing crisis has contributed to a backup of potential residents in hospitals. Preserving access to long term care in Wisconsin requires extensive investment in these essential healthcare services.

The local effects of the national staffing crisis can be seen in Wisconsin data. Weekly, National Health Safety Network (NSHN) reporting requires nursing facilities to report resident census and whether they are experiencing a caregiver shortage. Tracking these trends over the last six months shows that as provider relief funds were exhausted and resulting caregiver shortages became more extreme, Wisconsin residents found their access to quality long term care diminished (see graph on next page).

[Note: Although the data that follows is from formal required nursing facility reporting, assisted living providers have experienced similar staffing shortages and admissions challenges.]

Making the situation worse, Wisconsin nursing homes are not making these decisions for today alone. Providers have been returning bed licenses to the state (see below), positioning the state poorly for an expected increase in long term care needs due to aging of the population. Since the start of the pandemic, 2116 nursing home beds have been erased from the system - the equivalent of thirty 70-bed nursing homes - primarily due to a lack of staff.

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***LeadingAge Wisconsin***

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Source: [NHSN Nursing Home Data](https://data.cms.gov/covid-19/covid-19-nursing-home-data)

Source: [Bureau of Labor Statistics (long-term care)](https://data.bls.gov/timeseries/CES6562300001?amp%253bdata_tool=XGtable&output_view=data&include_graphs=true)

Source: [Bureau of Labor Statistics (hospitals)](https://data.bls.gov/timeseries/CES6562200001?amp%253bdata_tool=XGtable&output_view=data&include_graphs=true)

Source: [Bureau of Labor Statistics (ambulatory health care services)](https://data.bls.gov/timeseries/CES6562100001?amp%253bdata_tool=XGtable&output_view=data&include_graphs=true)