



September 18, 2013

To: Senator Leah Vukmir, Chair
Members, Senate Health and Human Services Committee

From: John Sauer, President/CEO
Tom Ramsey, Vice President of Public Policy & Advocacy

Subject: 2013 Senate Bill 212

Position: **Support for SB 212 and an Amendment to the Bill to "Grandfather" Certain Certified Nurse Aides**

LeadingAge Wisconsin, formerly WAHSA, is a statewide membership association of not-for-profit organizations principally serving seniors and persons with a disability. Membership is comprised of 195 religious, fraternal, private and governmental organizations which own, operate and/or sponsor 172 nursing homes, 7 facilities for the intellectually and developmentally disabled (FDD), 182 assisted living facilities, 102 apartment complexes for seniors, and over 300 community service agencies which provide programs ranging from Alzheimer's support, adult and child day care, home health, home care, and hospice to Meals on Wheels. LeadingAge Wisconsin members employ over 38,000 individuals who provide compassionate care and service to over 48,000 residents/tenants/clients each day.

LeadingAge Wisconsin members support the passage of 2013 Senate Bill 212.

Certified nurse aides provide the bulk of direct, hands-on care in nursing homes; they are the backbone of caregiving in long-term care facilities. Under federal law, a nurse aide is required to have successfully completed a training program consisting of no less than 75 clock hours and passed a competency evaluation test in order to be certified to work in a nursing home. In 2008, the then-Department of Health and Family Services revised HFS 129 (now DHS 129) to increase Wisconsin's minimum certified nurse aide (CNA) training requirement from 75 hours to 120 hours. Illinois also has a minimum 120-hour CNA training requirement; however, Minnesota, Michigan and Iowa have maintained the 75-hour requirement consistent with federal law.

While Wisconsin's 120-hour CNA training requirement arguably produces better trained and qualified CNAs, it has placed Wisconsin providers, specifically those along the Minnesota, Michigan and Iowa borders, at a competitive disadvantage. It obviously is cheaper to take a 75-hour training course and begin working as a CNA in Minnesota (or Michigan and Iowa) than it is to comply with Wisconsin's 120-hour requirement. What makes it even more difficult for Wisconsin providers to recruit out-of-state CNAs under current law is that none of the training hours they garnered out-of-state can apply to an out-of-state CNA seeking employment in Wisconsin. So the 75 hours of training that a prospective CNA received in Minnesota would not apply if that individual sought work as a CNA in Hudson or La Crosse; they would have to take the entire 120-hour training course in order to work in a Wisconsin nursing home (or hospital, hospice or home health agency).

SB 212 would allow these individuals to apply the 75-hours of CNA training they received out-of-state to Wisconsin's 120-hour requirement through a 45-hour "bridge" training program to be approved by the Department of Health Services. LeadingAge Wisconsin members believe this "bridge" training program would enable them to better compete for valued and valuable CNAs from another state with the 75-hour requirement.

However, LeadingAge Wisconsin respectfully urge members of the Senate Health and Human Services Committee to consider what we truly believe is a "friendly" amendment to SB 212: provide an exemption to the "bridge" training requirement to a CNA that is certified in a state with the 75-hour requirement but has worked as a CNA in that state for at least 2,080 hours (1 year) in the past 24 months.

This "grandfather" provision not only would make Wisconsin providers even more competitive with their border state provider competitors but arguably would enable Wisconsin providers to hire more competent and qualified CNAs. A CNA with a minimum of a year's experience is simply going to be more qualified and better prepared "to hit the floor running" than an individual who has just completed the 45-hour "bridge" program needed to meet Wisconsin's 120-hour CNA training requirement.

LeadingAge Wisconsin urges committee members to amend SB 212 to include this experience component to the CNA training requirement and recommend for passage SB 212 as amended.

For more information, please contact John Sauer (jsauer@LeadingAgeWI.org), LeadingAge Wisconsin President/CEO, Tom Ramsey (tramsey@LeadingAgeWI.org), LeadingAge Wisconsin Vice President of Public Policy & Advocacy or Brian Schoeneck (bschoeneck@LeadingAgeWI.org), LeadingAge Wisconsin Vice President of Financial and Regulatory Services, at (608)-255-7060.