

Legislators, Long-Term Care Imperative Leaders and Caregivers Urge Legislature to Address the Senior Caregiver Shortage

ST. PAUL, MINN. – Today, members of the senior care community and state lawmakers will urge the Senate Health and Human Services Committee to act swiftly on the senior caregiver shortage. Current shortfalls in state funding continue to diminish access to senior care, but bipartisan legislation being heard in the Senate provides an opportunity to support Minnesota’s one million seniors and counting.

Patti Cullen from Care Providers of Minnesota, Kari Thurlow from LeadingAge Minnesota, long-term caregivers, and Minnesota seniors will testify at today’s hearing. On behalf of seniors and their families across the state, they are working to prevent legislative outcomes similar to that of last year, when the 2022 legislative session closed without meaningful solutions.

Since that time, vacancy rates for aides and nursing positions in nursing facilities climbed over 20%, and as a result, many facilities are turning away seniors because they do not have enough staff. 11,000 admission requests were denied in October of 2022 alone. Seniors and their families are forced onto long waiting lists or to find care in communities far from their families.

“I know there are many deserving of consideration in your budgeting this year,” said Mary Eileen Sorenson, age 84, a resident at Westwood Ridge Assisted Living Campus in West St. Paul. “I would just like to remind you, because we do feel forgotten at times. We are your elders. We hold the stories, memories, and life of our communities. We are bearers of the light of wisdom. We need nourishment, attention, and caring.”

Senior care leaders will speak with lawmakers about the importance of access to quality care setting for residents statewide.

“Once you find yourself or a loved one in need of additional support, the importance of access to local care and quality caregivers just hits you,” said Kari Thurlow, President and CEO of LeadingAge Minnesota. “For the legislators that have not yet realized this, I have one ask: Don’t forget our seniors this session.”

Advocates will remind lawmakers of their responsibility to address this workforce crisis. Inadequate state reimbursement rates cap already-low wages—the primary factor driving the senior caregiver shortage.

“The last thing any professional caregiver wants to see happen is an older adult and their family hear the words, ‘I’m sorry, we don’t have enough staff to take you in,’” said Patti Cullen, President and CEO of Care Providers of Minnesota. “Seniors have a right to quality care in their home communities that as of right now, hasn’t been fully supported by the State of Minnesota. With the state’s current surplus, not supporting our seniors is counter to everything Minnesotans stand for.”

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The Long-Term Care Imperative is a collaboration of LeadingAge Minnesota and Care Providers of Minnesota, two of the state’s largest long-term care associations. The Long-Term Care Imperative is committed to advancing a shared vision and future for older adult housing, health care and supportive services.