



State Senator Sheila Harsdorf

Date: September 18, 2013
To: Senate Committee on Health and Human Services
Fr: Senator Sheila Harsdorf
Re: Senate Bill 212—Instructional programs for nurse aides

Dear Chair Vukmir and Committee Members,

Thank you for holding a public hearing on Senate Bill 212 (SB 212), which would allow the Department of Health Services (DHS) to approve instructional programs for nurse aides, also known as certified nursing assistants or CNAs, who have received CNA training outside of Wisconsin and are seeking employment in Wisconsin as a CNA. I appreciate the opportunity to speak in support of passage of SB 212.

Federal law requires that CNAs receive a minimum of 75 hours of training. However, individual states are allowed to set more stringent training standards. Wisconsin currently exceeds the federal requirement for CNA instructional programs. In 2008, Wisconsin increased its training requirement from 75 hours to require that CNA training programs provide at least 120 hours of training, which includes a minimum of 32 hours of clinical training.

While Wisconsin requires 120 hours of training, many states do not have this increased requirement for CNA training and use the federal standard of 75 hours. Of our neighboring states, only Illinois requires the same amount of training hours as Wisconsin. Minnesota, Michigan, and Iowa all require 75 hours of training.

SB 212 would allow individuals who have successfully completed training in another state as a CNA to combine previous training with DHS approved instructional programs in order to make up the difference in training hours required in order to work as a CNA in Wisconsin. Currently, a CNA who has received training in a state with lower requirements than Wisconsin is required to start from the beginning and complete a training program in Wisconsin for the full 120 hours.

The service CNAs provide is an important level of care in our healthcare system. Both nursing homes and home care agencies rely on the care that CNAs provide. This bill increases access to the nurse aide profession by providing an opportunity for CNAs relocating to Wisconsin or those living in border communities to make up the difference in training hours required in order to be employed in Wisconsin as a CNA. Given the growing need for skilled health care workers, particularly nurses, this legislation is a common-sense reform to state regulations that will help expand the pool of qualified workers for open positions in our state.

I urge your support for this legislation in order to make it easier for individuals from out-of-state to be employed as CNAs in Wisconsin. Thank you again for allowing me to speak in favor of the passage of SB 212. I would welcome the opportunity to take questions.



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.



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TO: Senator Leah Vukmir, Chair and Members of the Senate Health and Human Services Committee

FROM: Gina Dennik-Champion, MSN, RN, MSHA
Wisconsin Nurses Association Executive Director

DATE: September 18, 2013

RE: Support of SB 212 - instructional programs for nurse aides and granting rule-making authority.

On behalf of the Wisconsin Nurses Association, I would like to thank you, Chairperson Vukmir, and members of Senate Health and Human Services Committee for holding this public hearing on SB 212. SB 212 provides an efficient and effective pathway for out-of-state Certified Nurse Assistants to enter Wisconsin's workforce. The Wisconsin Nurses Association had the opportunity to meet with Senator Harsdorf and provide feedback as part of her bill development process. We are pleased that SB 212 has been introduced as it will provide benefits related to the following:

- Supports Wisconsin's 120 hours of instruction to work as a Nurse Assistant in Wisconsin.
- Allows for the Certified Nurse Assistant student to complete only the additional 45 hours of required instruction versus repeating 75 hours of instruction already completed, passed, and paid for.
- The Nurse Assistant training agency must test for competency and knowledge required of the work role in order to work as a nurse assistant in Wisconsin.
- The Nurse Assistant will enter Wisconsin's workforce sooner by completing and passing only the additional required course work.
- Nurse Assistants are in high demand. This legislation will help address the shortages that exist in the Nurse Assistant workforce.

SB 212 possesses the necessary structure to support quality care and services that these important caregivers provide.

WNA would like to thank Senator Harsdorf for introducing this legislation and for those members of the legislature who have signed in support. We ask that members of the Committee support SB 212.

Thank you again to Senator Vukmir for holding this hearing.

**Testimony on Senate Bill 212
Senate Committee on Health and Human Services**

September 18, 2013

**Todd Costello, Executive Director
Community Living Alliance
608-242-8335, Ext. 1372
costellot@clanet.org**

Good morning Chairperson Vukmir and committee members. I appreciate the opportunity to testify before you today. My name is Todd Costello, and I am here to testify in favor of Senate Bill 212. We are grateful to Senator Harsdorf and Representative Bernier for introducing Senate Bill 212, and we are pleased to see the committee taking an interest in the needs of the long-term care workforce.

Wisconsin's long-term care workforce consists of Personal Care Aides, Home Health Aides and Nursing Aides who care for the elderly and people with disabilities. It totals over 90,000 workers, making it one of the largest occupational groupings in the state. Certified Nursing Assistants make up a large portion of the long-term care workforce, totaling over 37,000 CNAs in 2012.

Through my work as Chair of the Wisconsin Long Term Care Workforce Alliance, I have significant exposure to the Certified Nursing Assistant profession, as CNAs play a crucial role in the long-term care workforce. In its *Olmstead* decision, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that individuals with disabilities have a right to live in the community. Many people with disabilities, as well as the elderly, rely on Certified Nursing Assistants, Personal Care Workers and Home Health Aides to live independently and in the setting of their choice.

Certified Nursing Assistants are one of the fastest-growing occupations in the state and the Paraprofessional Healthcare Institute (PHI) projects the occupation to grow by 17% between 2010 and 2020. Moreover, Wisconsin's Workforce and Labor Market Information System, WORKNet, projects an average of 1,100 CNA job openings per year during the same timeframe.

One of the most significant challenges facing the long-term care workforce is high turnover rates, which is compounded by a shortage of available family caregivers and a rapidly aging population. The Department of Health Services projects that Wisconsin's elderly population will grow by over 100,000 people between 2010 and 2015, one-third of whom will require long-term care. And a recent report released by AARP projects that by 2030 there will be, on average, only 4 available family caregivers for each person who is 80 or older—down from an average of

seven in 2010. Long-term care workers will play an important role in caring for Wisconsin's aging population, but the field is faced with a growing shortage of skilled workers.

Finding well-trained individuals to fill these positions will be incredibly important for both strengthening Wisconsin's economy and ensuring that individuals with disabilities and the elderly receive quality care.

SB 212 is an important step in addressing the challenges facing the long-term care workforce, as it makes it easier to recruit and hire employees who may have received their training in another state. We hope this Committee and the Legislature continues to invest in and support a quality long-term care workforce.

Thank you for your time.

GUNDERSEN HEALTH SYSTEM®

September 18, 2013

The Honorable Leah Vukmir
Committee on Health & Human Services
Wisconsin State Senate
Madison, WI

RE: Gundersen Supports SB 212/AB 249 Relating to CNA Training Requirements

Dear Chairwoman Vukmir & Committee Members:

I am writing on behalf of Gundersen Health System to share our support for Senate Bill 212/Assembly Bill 249 relating to instructional programs for certified nursing assistants (CNAs) and granting rule-making authority.

Gundersen is an integrated health system headquartered in La Crosse with hospitals, clinics, health plan, air and ground ambulance and medical education programs serving the tri-state region of Wisconsin, Minnesota and Iowa along the rural stretches of the Mississippi River. We collaborate with a variety of nursing programs, including Western Technical College, Viterbo University, University of Wisconsin and others, to help train and develop our state's healthcare workforce.

CNAs play a significant role in the delivery of healthcare at Gundersen. We attract CNAs from a variety of states who are interested in practicing at a multi-state, integrated health system. However, we have found that the training requirements vary across states, making certification in Wisconsin an additional challenge for those already certified in other states. Wisconsin requires more training than federal law, Minnesota or Iowa, where Gundersen operates and 75 hours is the standard.

Gundersen supports this legislation because it provides the opportunity for CNAs from other states like Iowa and Minnesota to bridge the difference with a Wisconsin-approved instructional program that will minimize the need to repeat training hours already completed.

We encourage the Committee and Legislature to support this legislation and are willing to be a resource for any questions.

Sincerely,



Eric C. Tempelis
Director of Government Relations



Christian Community Homes and Services, Inc.

September 17, 2013

Senator Sheila Harsdorf
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& Christian Community
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Assisted Living**

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Memory Care**

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**Christian
Community Home
Skilled Nursing Care
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**The Red Oak Center
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Dear Sheila,

Thank you for authoring SB212. This is a much needed and very welcome initiative on behalf of Wisconsin's western border counties who compete with Minnesota for Nursing Assistant employees. As you likely know, the health care job market is tightening up, especially for Certified Nursing Assistants. We see this effort as potentially very helpful to our facilities in both St. Croix and Polk counties. Approval of SB212 will make a fundamental improvement to Wisconsin's competitive position for this increasingly important employee category.

Since Minnesota's educational standard for CNA's has been different than Wisconsin's, many potential CNA's have chosen (I suggest mostly by necessity) to become certified in Minnesota. Without this change, Wisconsin clearly loses some good workers to the less restrictive training standard.

The 45-hour bridge training is a great idea and will mitigate a lot of this issue. However, I wish to go on record in support of a potential improvement amendment that I believe is consistent with the goal of SB212.

As a member of the board of directors of LeadingAge Wisconsin, which represents the state's not-for-profit long-term care providers, I would like to request your consideration of a "friendly" amendment to SB 212 recommended by our Board which would exempt from the "bridge" training requirements nurse aides that were certified in another state if they also have been employed as CNAs in that other state for at least 2,080 hours (1 year) in the past 24 months (2 years).

I believe the actual work experience will be as valuable to the CNA and would enhance the goal of SB212 to keep the very best workers in Wisconsin's health care facilities.

Thank you and thanks to your colleagues in the Senate for their support of this valuable employment initiative.

Sincerely,

Dan C. Goodier
Executive Director

September 15, 2013

The Honorable Leah Vukmir, Chairman and Committee Members
Committee on Health and Human Services
Wisconsin State Senate
Madison, WI

Re: In support of Senate Bill 212, Relating to: instructional programs for nurse aides and granting rule-making authority.

Madam Chairman and Members of the Committee:

As a Registered Nurse and concerned citizen, I would like the committee to recognize the positive implications that Senate Bill 212 will have on the citizens of Wisconsin.

The population is aging and as people live longer, competent care for chronic conditions is needed to provide safe and effective care to the most vulnerable citizens of our communities. The health care system relies heavily on RNs and the aids that assist them in delivering care. Nurse aids will continue to be in high demand as we strive to improve the quality of people's lives not only in long term care facilities but also in individual's homes which is proving to deliver high customer satisfaction as well as being the most cost effective care deliverable.

The State of Wisconsin requires nurse aids of complete 120 hours of instruction. While Wisconsin is not the state that requires the highest number of hours, it is one of only 12 states that require 120 hours or more. This limits the number of potential nurse aids who could easily cross the border and begin working. It would not serve the interest of providing quality care to lower the standard of 120 hours, however, providing a means to acquire the additional hours necessary to meet the standard is prudent.

Currently, if a nurse aid would like to travel to Wisconsin to work or if they move here from another state and that person does not have the 120 hours of required instructions, there is no opportunity to meet the requirement without repeating the whole 120 hours of instructions. This is a road block for potential employees in a time when nurse aids demand will outstrip the supply and also at a time when job growth is a goal for the current Governor, Scott Walker.

By supporting Senate Bill 212, Wisconsin will provide a practical road map that will continue to supply high quality nurse aids. Also, Wisconsin will once again show leadership and vision since no other state has developed this opportunity for such crucial members of our workforce.

Thank you for this opportunity to submit my written testimony in support of Senate Bill 212

Respectfully,

Sue Irle, MSN, RN

PO box 131

Star Prairie, WI 54026

WISCONSIN HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION, INC.



Date: September 18, 2013

To: Members of the Senate Committee on Health and Human Services

From: Judy Warmuth, Vice President – Workforce Development
Kyle O'Brien, Vice President – Government Relations

Re: Wisconsin Hospital Association Testimony Supporting SB 212

The Wisconsin Hospital Association (WHA) supports Senate Bill 212 which allows for the creation of a 'bridge' program for Certified Nurse Aides (CNA). We understand that this legislation would allow individuals who have successfully completed CNA training in another state to combine that previous training with a DHS approved 'bridge' program in order to be certified in Wisconsin. Currently, a CNA who has received training in a state with lower requirements than Wisconsin is not allowed to carryover any training or experience for the purposes of receiving a state certification. This bill will allow experienced and qualified CNAs to quickly meet the same standards as required by the state for current CNAs in Wisconsin.

Nurse aides are an important component of care delivery in hospitals and in other health care settings. Many individual CNAs employed by hospitals are temporarily in the role while studying to be nurses or other members of the health care team. These students quickly exit the CNA role when they complete their programs. The result is that health facilities must continually recruit and hire individuals into CNA positions. For hospitals that provide service along or near Wisconsin borders, the current situation inhibits a health care facility's ability to recruit individuals that were trained in Minnesota or Michigan.

In 2012, Wisconsin hospitals employed over 7,000 individuals as Certified Nurse Aides. That same year, the WHA vacancy survey revealed 435 vacant CNA positions in Wisconsin hospitals. The change proposed by SB 212 creating a shortened course to prepare CNAs that do not meet the current Wisconsin education requirement from other states could allow for these positions to be more easily filled. It would also result in more individuals being employed in the secure, family supporting jobs that hospitals provide.

Wisconsin hospitals are committed to providing high quality care for our patients and families. SB 212 would help hospitals secure the qualified CNAs they need to accomplish this mission.

Thank you for your time and please let us know of any questions that you may have.