

Testimony in Support of HB2524
Committee on Children and Seniors
January 31, 2022

Chair and Members of the Committee.

My name is Jennifer Sourk and I appear before you today on behalf of Midwest Health and its 47 Kansas long term care facilities which cares for more than 2,000 residents living in adult care homes which is in strong support of HB2524. Our facilities also care for hundreds of the more vulnerable Medicaid recipients and the largest assisted living provider for Medicaid in Kansas.

Long-term care providers, specifically skilled nursing facilities, must comply with a lengthy list of compliance protocols with regard to training, background checks and competencies for employees to ensure the highest quality of care for residents living in a facility. However, staffing agencies are not required to meet the same standards and there is a significant chance that a licensed professional staff member who may be prohibited from working in a long-term care facility or one which has such a background to prove undesirable, would be sent to work in a facility. Staffing agencies should be required and regulated to meet the same scrutiny as long-term care providers to ensure the same protections are in place for our seniors.

As we still navigate the pandemic, we continue to struggle with keeping staff due to exhaustion, high frequency of testing, risk of contracting COVID-19, and overall stress of caring for those most vulnerable to COVID-19. Worst of all, due to our staffing crisis, we have been led to deny admissions for those who are in need of care, and this is occurring in the rural areas of Kansas when trained and licensed staff are limited.

Long-term care facilities have taken on so many additional expenses during the pandemic from PPE to additional staff to screen, report, and comply with the laws and regulations, they cannot compete or continue to provide care as our reimbursement rates have not increased to sustain such expense. The long-term care industry is in need of support to continue to do our best to provide the highest quality of care, consistency in staffing but at an expense that will allow us to continue to care for those in need of care as our reimbursement rates do not match the increase in pay that the pandemic has caused.