

**PREPARED TESTIMONY OF Andrea Sussman
Board Chair of the Home Care Association of America NJ Chapter
& Home Instead Senior Care Franchise Owner
For the
Assembly Regulated Professions Committee**

March 6, 2025

**CONCERNING THE ORGANIZATION OF THE STATE PROFESSIONAL
BOARDS AND THE DELAYS IN THE LICENSURE PROCESS ASSOCIATED
WITH THESE BOARDS.**

My name is Andrea Sussman, I am the Board Chair of the Home Care Association of America's NJ Chapter and the previous owner of Home Instead Senior Care, a licensed and accredited Health Care Service Firm, (HCSF), located in Succasunna.

I would like to make you aware of the cumbersome process that delays the licensure of Certified Home Health Aide (CHHA) and has an impact on the delivery of home care to our frail seniors in desperate need of homecare services and the small businesses providing these services.

Like many small businesses in the homecare industry, our organization is experiencing an unprecedented crisis to hire staff. As a state licensed and accredited HCSF, I relied on Certified Home Health Aides (CHHAs) licensed by the New Jersey Board of Nursing and overseen by the Division of Consumer Affairs (DCA) to care for my clients. The DCA's lengthy process to certify both new and reinstatement CHHA applicants in a timely manner has created a public health crisis for seniors in our state.

The current demand for home care services for the frail senior and disabled population in NJ far exceeds the supply of state licensed CHHAs. This problem is made worse by the DCA's inability to process the applications in a timely manner.

The state's certification process presents consistent and avoidable roadblocks that often cause a CHHA application to take several weeks to several months to become active. As a result of this long wait time, CHHA candidates often seek employment in other fields outside of healthcare. Not only are our member companies losing qualified, caring, dedicated, and committed CHHAs before they can even begin a career in the caregiving field, seniors are going without the much-needed care to allow them to stay at home and are instead being forced into the states' long-term care facilities and onto Medicaid's roster. This serious [gross] delay in licensing by the DCA is simply unacceptable.

The Division of Consumer Affairs/Regulated Business Section and the New Jersey Board of Nursing appear to have difficulty properly supporting the administrative requirements of

licensing CHHAs in NJ. Here are some of our concerns regarding the DCA and the CHHA application process:

- No transparency into the status of CHHA applications: Many applications remain in a “Pending” status for an undisclosed period with no viable explanation.
- Telephone calls, voice mail messages, and emails go unanswered: Applicants, HCSF’s, and vocational schools must call repeatedly to contact a live person.
- Significantly understaffed: The DCA currently has a small staff to process and manage 50K plus CHHAs in NJ.
- Poor technology: New CHHA applicants complete on-line applications, while reinstatement applications are done entirely on paper and sent via the USPS. Documents are regularly missing, lost or remain unopened by the DCA and technological issues with uploading required documents are frequently experienced.
- There is only one approved vendor to complete the required criminal background check for applicants of all licensing boards. It takes four to six weeks on average for an applicant to get an appointment for the required fingerprinting.

Our businesses, along with nearly 1,200 HCSFs in NJ, is committed to providing the best quality care to our states' most needy and vulnerable population. Our shared goal needs to be to help fulfill our senior citizens’ wishes to live at home for as long as possible with suitable care being provided by qualified and certified home health aides.

It is challenging enough for HCSFs to find suitable mission-driven applicants that desire a career as a CHHA; to then force them to wait several weeks to months to be able to work in their chosen (entry-level) field after completing all of the requirements for licensing is reprehensible, especially while those in desperate need of care are now finding it more and more difficult to obtain these services. I respectfully ask that you please investigate the DCA’s process for the licensing of CHHAs. These CHHAs are eager to work, and their services are greatly needed. I welcome the opportunity to meet with you and your staff to discuss this matter further.

Thank you for your consideration.

Andrea Sussman, MSW
NJ Chapter Chair, HCAOA