



***Via Electronic Submission***

March 20, 2023

The Honorable Bernie Sanders, Chair  
United States Senate  
332 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Bill Cassidy, Ranking Member  
United States Senate  
455 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

**Re: Request for Information resulting from the February 16, 2023 hearing entitled  
[“Examining Health Care Workforce Shortages: Where Do We Go From Here?”](#)**

Chairman Sanders and Ranking Member Cassidy,

The Home Care Association of America (“HCAOA”) respectfully submits these comments to the United States Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions in response to the above-referenced hearing and subsequent request for information concerning the drivers of and potential solutions to the health care workforce shortage.

By way of background, HCAOA is the home care industry’s leading trade association. We currently represent over 4,500 companies that employ nearly two million caregivers (home care aides) across the country. HCAOA member companies primarily provide supportive services in people’s private homes. Our caregivers assist with a variety of activities of daily living, such as bathing, dressing, eating, and many other services necessary to live as independently as possible at home. Many of our members also engage in skilled care in home. The majority of this care is family funded.

**Background**

The need for more home care workers is on a direct collision course with the United States population demographics, which predicts that between 2020 and 2030, the number of US citizens 85 years of age or older will double, from the current 2.4 million. Such growth in the U.S. aged population exacerbates the current shortage of caregivers that over 12 million people of all ages rely on today.

Despite the best efforts of industry leadership and management, the gap between the numbers of patients and families seeking assistance and the availability of workers to provide that care is accelerating at an alarming and unsustainable pace. Direct care workforce think tank [PHI](#) reports that the home care workforce more than doubled in size over the past decade, jumping from just over 1 million workers in 2010 to more than 2.4 million in 2020. The home care nursing workforce, in comparison, has shrunk since 2020. The outcome of both is that the workforce is insufficient to meet the needs of the population of adults 65 years of age that is projected to double in the coming decade along with people of all other age groups that depend on health care services at home.



This crisis has society-wide repercussions. When families need to step in with more support, there are implications for their employers, their coworkers, and other members of their families, including spouses and children. The AARP Policy Institute reports that 69% of working caregivers rearrange their work schedule, decrease their hours, or take an unpaid leave in order to meet their caregiving responsibilities.

Our acute health and long-term care sectors depend on the availability of the homecare workforce as well. The accessibility of homebased care is essential to their ability to move patients out of inpatient settings, maintain bed availability for the most acute, and to contain health care costs. Home health care providers currently report rejecting over 25% of referred patients due to staff shortages.

We must get a handle on this crisis before it totally overwhelms our nation's health care system. Below, we outline some of the drivers of and potential solutions to the health care workforce shortage.

### Drivers of the Workforce Shortage

The current workforce shortage is by no means particular to the home care industry. However, the following issues are exacerbating the labor crisis in our sector:

- Medicaid reimbursement rates that have not kept up with a red-hot inflationary environment that is currently supporting retail/hospitality wages that are well above minimum wage.
- A dramatic slowdown in the flow of immigrants, who traditionally made up a large part of the applicant pool. According to the Immigration Policy Institute, the pandemic led to sharp drops in immigration to the United States, to levels not seen in decades. Issuance of visas for legal permanent residence fell 48 percent between fiscal years 2019 and 2020, while temporary visa issuances dropped 54 percent.
- Caregivers that cannot accept promotions or full-time work for fear of falling off state "benefit cliffs" that force certain individuals to lose some or all public assistance benefits. PHI's latest report indicates that 50% of caregivers are receiving some form of public assistance, such as housing, food, or health care support. (Note: The cliff effect refers to the sudden and often unexpected decrease in public benefits that can occur when a person realizes a small increase in earnings.)
- High turnover rates within the first year of hire, particularly within the first 90 days, according to a recent MissionCare/myCNA jobs study.

### Potential Solutions to the Workforce Shortage

The home care industry is invested in forming and implementing solutions to this shortage. Our ideas include:



- Collaborating with other national senior care organizations to develop a framework for immigration reform that focuses on caregivers to provide for an elder care visa expansion immigration bill, specifically allowing H-2C non-immigrant classification for workers providing services to the elderly and disabled.
- Supporting and advocating for legislation such as the Credit for Caring Act, Home Care for Seniors Act and the Elizabeth Dole Home Care Act, all of which support family caregivers.
- Encouraging CMS to more fully support and fund home- and community based services.
- Advocating for the passage of the Better Care Better Jobs Act and the HCBS Access Act, both of which broaden the accessibility of home care and improves caregiver wages.
- Convening a broad coalition of individuals/organizations, including family and professional caregivers, with a vested interest in the supply and quality of the home care workforce to seek support in priority areas.
- Partnering with local chapters and state associations on a tool kit to lobby for the state allocation of workforce development funds to recruit and train a new cohort of caregivers.
- Supporting a model of state home care licensure that balances professionalizing the workforce with defined competencies, care standards, and reasonable oversight.
- Developing and promote adoption of core competencies for caregivers by home care agencies across the country, especially in states where there are no home care regulations.

Thank you for your solicitation and consideration of our submission. Please know that our association is always here to assist the Committee in any way possible. Feel free to contact me at [vicki@hcaoa.org](mailto:vicki@hcaoa.org) or our Vice President of Government Relations, Eric Reinerman, at [eric@hcaoa.org](mailto:eric@hcaoa.org), with any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Vicki Hoak". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Vicki Hoak, CEO  
Home Care Association of America