

LeadingAge™ Wyoming

January 25, 2023

Staffing Mandates in Nursing Homes

Many of our nursing homes are in very remote and isolated parts of our state. Staffing mandates do not ensure good care and may in fact make it harder to provide good care to the residents in nursing homes.

An article by McKnights discusses a letter from a number of US Senators, including Cynthia Lummis, expressing concerns about any proposal from CMS for staffing mandates in nursing homes.

We are grateful for the leadership of Senators Barrasso and Lummis on this very important issue.

[Click here to read the article](#)



John Barrasso
— U.S. SENATOR * WYOMING —
Chairman, Senate Republican Conference

Barrasso, Tester, Daines, Hickenlooper Push Biden Admin to Address Rural Nursing Home Staffing Shortages

U.S. Senators John Barrasso (R-Wyo.), Jon Tester (D-Mont.), Steve Daines (R-Mont.), John Hickenlooper (D-Colo.), and colleagues today sent a letter to Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) Administrator Chiquita Brooks-LaSure expressing concerns about CMS' intent to issue additional staffing mandates for nursing homes.

In the letter, the senators discourage CMS from taking a "one-size-fits-all" approach and instead address the significant workforce shortages affecting rural America.

"We fear a one-size-fits-all staffing mandate would undermine access to care for patients, particularly in rural communities," the senators wrote. *"Instead, we urge you to work*

with Congress and rural stakeholders on tailored solutions that address the severe workforce challenges in our states' underserved areas."

"Going forward, we recognize CMS as a crucial partner in identifying, mitigating, and preventing future health and safety problems in nursing homes," the letter continued. "We stand ready to work with your agency on proposals to improve long-term care for patients. The best way to accomplish this goal is working with Congress and stakeholders to ensure any future actions do not further exacerbate the serious challenges already facing facilities in rural America."

The letter was also signed by Senators John Thune (R-S.D.), Gary Peters (D-Mich.), Kevin Cramer (R-N.D.), Joe Manchin (D-W.Va.), Deb Fischer (R-Neb.), Kyrsten Sinema (D-Ariz.), John Hoeven (R-N.D.), Cynthia Lummis (R-Wyo.), and Mike Rounds (R-S.D.).

"I'm grateful for this bipartisan effort to push back on additional burden and complex rules for Wyoming nursing homes. Nursing homes across the state are already struggling with staffing shortages, and further prescribed staffing levels would put many of these important nursing homes in financial jeopardy. If additional staffing requirements are implemented, we could see the closure of many rural nursing homes, leaving vulnerable patients and large geographical areas without much-need services. I'm grateful to Senator Barrasso for his leadership on this issue." - Eric Boley, President, LeadingAge Wyoming

Text of the letter can be found below.

Dear Administrator Brooks-LaSure,

We write to express our concerns regarding the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services' (CMS) intent to issue staffing mandates for nursing homes.

Like you, we understand the importance of ensuring beneficiaries of federal health care programs have access to safe and high-quality nursing care. However, we fear a one-size-fits-all staffing mandate would undermine access to care for patients, particularly in rural communities. Instead, we urge you to work with Congress and rural stakeholders on tailored solutions that address the severe workforce challenges in our states' underserved areas.

While we support evidence-based policies to improve beneficiary care in nursing homes, staffing mandates are not the only solution. First, sweeping staffing mandates do not account for individual facilities' operational capabilities and local workforce conditions. For example, minimum staffing standards that establish strict staff-to-patient ratios and/or minimum hours per resident day requirements may not reflect optimal staffing levels given differences in patients' needs and underlying conditions, as well as the skills of the personnel at-hand.

Additionally, blanket staffing standards may not provide enough flexibility to nursing homes in light of well-known and long-standing obstacles to the recruitment and retention of direct care workers, especially in rural and underserved areas. This challenge is exacerbated by the fact that the health care sector is projected to have a shortage of nurses (10 to 20% based on a spring 2022 estimate) in the coming years.

Finally, meeting staffing mandates will place nursing homes in financial jeopardy. This could lead to the shuttering of facilities, especially in rural communities. There is no question such a scenario would only amount to a counterproductive regulatory environment that leaves vulnerable patients and their families with far less access to care.

Going forward, we recognize CMS as a crucial partner in identifying, mitigating, and preventing future health and safety problems in nursing homes. We stand ready to work with your agency on proposals to improve long-term care for patients. The best way to accomplish this goal is working with Congress and stakeholders to ensure any future actions do not further exacerbate the serious challenges already facing facilities in rural America.

Rocky Mountain Care Receives Pinnacle Award



Rocky Mountain Care-Evanston announced that they have been awarded with a Pinnacle Customer Experience Award! Over the course of the last twelve months, Pinnacle Quality Insight, a nationally recognized customer satisfaction firm, has interviewed the customers of Rocky Mountain Care-Evanston regarding their satisfaction levels.

This award is presented to care providers who have achieved best-in-class customer satisfaction standards within their peer group. We thank our amazing staff for providing high quality customer service to our residents.



Wyoming Hospital Association | 2005 Warren Ave, Cheyenne, WY 82001-3725

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