

SENATE REPUBLICAN NURSING HOME RELIEF PACKAGE

Minnesota's long term care centers are facing a looming crisis, with many on the edge of closing due to staff and financial hardship. The next few weeks and months present our nursing homes with unprecedented risk, including being unable to serve Minnesota's most vulnerable seniors.

To counter this dire outlook, we propose a series of actions to stabilize the current workforce, recruit additional staff, and help those facilities facing severe financial shortfalls.

These proposals will cost an estimated \$150-200 million, to be taken from federal funds left on the bottom line at the end of the last legislative session.

This plan is a bridge to support these homes through a crisis period. Next session we will need to dig deeper into solving the long-standing workforce shortages in the industry.

We are calling on Governor Walz and his administration to work with providers, stakeholders, and legislators to implement these proposals and chart a path to keep our nursing home system operational, safe, and available statewide to all who need those services.

Nursing Home Workforce Stabilization:

A multi-prong approach to retain the current staff, recruit new nursing home staff, and respond to crisis needs to replace staff expected to leave the industry.

PROPOSALS:

Nursing home staff retention grants: This proposal would allow nursing homes to provide \$1,500 to each current employee to remain working through these challenging times. The program would require a staff member to remain in their job until at least June 30, 2022, to be eligible for the entire grant amount. With thousands of staff leaving the workforce, we must act boldly to keep sufficient staff in our nursing homes across the state to care for and keep our loved ones safe.

Reach out to recently separated staff: Thousands of nursing home staff have recently left the employment of a nursing home. A number would return given sufficient encouragement and accommodation. This proposal would allow nursing homes to provide \$1500 to former employees who

return and work at least until June 30, 2022.

Nursing home staff career path assistance:

1. Provide funding to attract key NH workers who commit to accept positions within a nursing home. Provide upfront funding for CNA (Certified Nursing Assistant) training (\$1,000) and \$1,000 bonuses to those who continue working through May 31, 2022.
2. **Loan Forgiveness:** Provide focused higher education and advanced training loan forgiveness for nursing home staff and administrators who work through the end of 2022. This program would provide a benefit aimed at recruiting and retaining staff in our nursing homes. These dollars can be used to help individuals pay down student loans and ease other personal financial challenges. This would be in addition to already existing loan forgiveness programs.

Out-of-state nurses: This proposal would allow any RN, LPN, or CNA licensed or certified in any other state to work in a Minnesota nursing home for up to 6 months. This would allow nursing homes to recruit staff from other states to help close staffing gaps that exist now. This would be coordinated by the MN Board of Nursing.

CNA work requirement changes: Allow CNAs to begin work in a nursing home setting with an 8-hour basic training instead of the normal full training. This would allow nursing homes to have staff available to fill current staffing shortage. Training would continue to complete the CNA requirements.

Retired Nurses: Allow retired APRNs, RNs and LPNs to work in a nursing home for up to 6 months without full license reinstatement. These retired professionals have the necessary skill to help fill short-term gaps in our nursing homes. They would register with the MN Board of Nursing.

Suspend nursing pool pay cap: 6-month suspension of the caps on pay for APRNs, RNs and LPNs in nursing homes. This move would help attract and retain qualified professionals in nursing homes. This will help in the short-term, but the underlying problem of excessive pay for “traveling” staff is present throughout the acute and long-term care system and must be addressed.

Treat all state employees the same: Under the current state mandate on state employees regarding COVID testing, some state employees are given non-collectively bargained employment benefits, and some aren't. We request the administration to treat all state employees equally.

Nursing Home Support:

Goal: To keep nursing homes open where we need them most, by providing emergency financial support and focusing regulation on essential concerns.

Reduce nursing home survey citations to life safety concerns: This proposal would reduce burdensome paperwork by placing a six-month moratorium on citations that do not threaten the health and safety of a patient. Nursing homes retain the duty to provide high quality safe and professional care for residents.

Emergency Voluntary “Receiverships”: This provision would allow nursing homes which are in danger of closing to enter into a special 6-month agreement with MDH and DHS, akin to the current receivership program. Through these agreements, a facility at risk for closure would work through the challenges in a collaborative manner with the agencies. This voluntary mechanism could prevent many homes from permanently closing.

Six-month waiver on surcharge (granny tax): This provision would waive the per bed license surcharge for 6 months for non-state-operated nursing homes, lowering operational costs overall for nursing homes.

Waive annual licensing fee for nursing homes in 2022: This proposal would waive for 2022 the state’s licensing fee on nursing homes. This will save these facilities thousands of dollars and allow them to use those funds to meet staffing challenges.

Energy Assistance for Nursing Homes: This proposal would allocate \$20 million to help nursing homes deal with rising energy costs. These dollars will be allocated directly to facilities in hopes of stabilizing budgets and taking one additional financial challenge off the table. With expected price spikes for heating this winter, nursing homes will be facing large bills they are not prepared to handle.

Modify current Governor’s proposal to support nursing homes. The recent \$50 million proposal should be modified to be paid out based on every licensed/operational nursing home bed, and not simply based on Medicaid-paid beds. This will be much simpler to administer and get the support out quicker.