



Testimony on S-2249
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Home Health Services and Staffing Association of New Jersey
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The Home Health Services and Staffing Association of New Jersey, representing more than 300 licensed home health service offices statewide, has some concerns with S-2249 that extends TDI to provide family leave benefits to workers caring for sick family members, newborn and newly adopted children.

There has been rapid growth in the home care industry during the past few years. The “baby boomers” have reached 60 years of age. More and more of these individuals are turning to more cost effective, in-home care support services rather than residential nursing care at three times the cost. The home health staff consists of certified home health aides licensed by the State of New Jersey; therefore the pool of employees is limited to a select group of individuals. Home health agencies do not have the luxury of hiring temporary employees if they are not state certified. The State of New Jersey mandates that certification. Given the reliance, at times a matter of life and death, patients have on their aides, it is vitally important to patient care that the agencies remain fully staffed and able to treat every individual with the care they deserve.

The backbone of the home health industry in New Jersey is small, independent agencies that would be impacted by the passage of S-2249. These small agencies cannot afford to pay for a three-month absence by an employee and hire a certified temporary employee perhaps at a premium because of scarcity, to fill the vacancy. Not to mention the possibility of not being able to find enough certified employees.

We are proud of the high quality of care that New Jersey patients receive – New Jersey has high standards and is viewed as one of the leaders in the home healthcare field. We do not want to jeopardize those standards nor the care of our patients.

Most agencies provide significant flexibility to their aides, typically women, to care for their families as the need arises. These aides work with their employer to develop schedules that are convenient for all involved. Home health agencies have a deep respect for their staff and the services they provide knowing how valuable a certified home health aide is to the continuum of care throughout New Jersey.

The home health industry is vital to the health and well being of New Jersey’s aging and disabled population, to put an additional strain on these agencies would be doing a disservice to the state’s most vulnerable population.

The Home Health Services and Staffing Association of New Jersey respectfully requests you exclude home health service firms from S-2249 or consider a shorter duration of absence.

Additional information from the ©2006 Health Workforce Solutions LLC study funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation:

The frontline workforce will become an increasingly important part of the United States health and health care system as the population ages

Within the frontline workforce long-term care employees (of which home health aides are a subset) comprise the largest percentage of ethnic minority workers, with half identified as an ethnic minority; 35% African American and 13% Latino. (Bureau of Labor Statistics Current Population Survey, 2005)

With an average of 21.4% of home health aides leaving their roles due to retirement, illness and death this leaves a gap that needs to be filled every year. Changes in disease, advances in technology, increases in consumer demand and costs will affect the entire health care system, but many frontline employers and workers will have fewer resources available to respond to those challenges. As our nation's health care needs increase, it is essential to the nation's health that policies be developed to ensure that a sustainable frontline workforce is available to deliver the highest quality of care and services.

There is something much bigger here to look at than family leave – we have a looming crisis in healthcare with a shortage of certified workers staring at us. In 1995 there were 58,000 healthcare workers in NJ. Today there are approximately 36,000 while the need continues to grow. Mainly due to the increased need to use only certified workers and a smaller pool of workers while the pool of patients ages and grows exponentially as the baby boomers feed into the patient population – educating larger numbers has been a challenge that we are now addressing. We need to play catch-up, not pay people to leave.

I reiterate what I said earlier: *These aides work with their employer to develop schedules that are convenient for all involved. Home health agencies have a deep respect for their staff and the services they provide knowing how valuable a certified home health aide is to the continuum of care in New Jersey.*

Respectfully submitted,



JoAnn C. Dixon
CEO