Workforce Solutions for Long Term Care

Caregivers must be a priority for Minnesota’s leaders in the 2015 legislative session

The state of Minnesota should ensure that all aging Minnesotans receive safe and quality care from experienced caregivers. Senior care providers struggle to recruit and retain experienced, quality caregivers in their settings due to lower wages and benefits. A stable workforce is a key ingredient to providing quality care. It is up to lawmakers to invest in these jobs and the caregiving profession.

The Long Term Care Imperative will present a comprehensive package of proposals to address the workforce crisis and to highlight the needs of long term care employers to policymakers both within the Health and Human Services and outside this traditional policy arena. The package will address three main areas: retention of current staff; attracting new individuals to the field of senior care; and the establishment of career ladders for individuals working in older adult services.

Retention of Caregivers

Nursing Facility Employee Scholarship Program: This is a proven program used by nursing facilities to retain employees while they are working and receiving an education. The Long Term Care Imperative will advance a package of policy enhancements designed to increase utilization and effectiveness of the existing program, including:

- Removal of the exclusion for Registered Nurses, allowing them to participate in the program;
- Reduction of the hour threshold participants must work from 20 hours to 15 hours;
- Increase to the allowable scholarship expenses (child care, transportation); and
- Establish an optional rate add-on incentive (.25/resident/day) for nursing facilities committed to establishing or enhancing a scholarship program.

Home and Community Based (HCBS) Scholarship Program: Create a new HCBS scholarship program. Explore program models that do not require federal match and may offer contracted administration by third party.

Attracting New Employees to the Senior Care Field

Targeted funding to Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) for promotion: Propose funding that furthers the advancement of long-term care careers, including grants to employers for employee training and education, grants to individuals to seek additional education, grants for conferences, grants to highlight long-term care career week and grants for funding of innovative adult training programs such as those which help train
low-income and under employed individuals; funding for mentorship models, and funding for simulation centers at local community colleges, etc.

**Nursing Assistant Training Costs:** Seek funding for reimbursement of Nursing Assistant training costs that employers are required to reimburse for newly trained nursing assistants.

**Nurse Loan Forgiveness:** Propose changes to the existing program to increase participation and effectiveness of this program through policy changes, including increased funding and removal of impediments for eligibility such as allowing new graduates to apply for the funds.

**Study on Long-Term Care Hiring Incentives:** Seek funding for a study to determine ways in which tax credits or hiring incentives can benefit long-term care employers to recruit, retain, and provide career ladders to employees in the long-term care field.

**Support New Career Ladders**

**Apprenticeship Rate Incentive:** Create an optional rate add-on incentive to assist organizations in implementing leadership and apprenticeship models. Modeled after the cost-based reimbursement policies of the Nursing Facility Scholarship Program, organizations would report increased costs to DHS and recoup expenses related to implementing higher level staff training and care delivery models built around state-recognized registered apprenticeship and leadership training programs.