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Long-Term Care Advocates Applaud Legislature's Adopted Budget

OLYMPIA – Advocates from skilled nursing and assisted living facilities at the Washington Health Care Association are applauding the Washington State Legislature's Adopted Budget for the 2025-27 Biennium, citing its investments in protecting vulnerable populations while navigating a challenging budget environment for protecting basic critical services.

"Long term care providers, nurses and clients are relieved after months of uncertainty regarding funding for critical care services in our state," said **Carma Matti-Jackson, CEO of the Washington Health Care Association**. "We are deeply grateful for the hard work of lawmakers in Olympia who found a way to protect the basics of our state's investments in long term care even while confronting a multibillion-dollar budget deficit. While there remains deep concern about the looming potential for federal cuts to Medicaid, the budget adopted by our state legislature sends a clear signal that providing care to vulnerable populations in Washington State will continue being a priority."

As adopted by the Legislature, Medicaid funding for assisted living and nursing homes will be updated to reflect the current costs of care (previously, Medicaid funding was determined by 2022 costs). Bridge funding for Medicaid is also maintained to support care in assisted living facilities with a high rate of service to patients who rely on Medicaid.

Around the state, community leaders have continued to call on the legislature for increased Medicaid funding for long-term care facilities. **Cole Casarez and Dell Workman, employees at North Central Care Center Skilled Nursing Facility in Spokane**, urged the legislature to stabilize the state Medicaid funding model in their Spokesman-Review [guest editorial](#) last month: "Now is the time to increase investments to stabilize our workforce," they wrote. "You don't have to work in long-term care to know the painful realities of high inflation in recent years. The real costs for supporting patients with Medicaid exceed state funding by more than \$60 million per year across the 197 skilled nursing facilities in Washington. This threatens our state's ability to lower barriers to accessing long-term care for those who need it."

"Our state legislature has recognized that the state-funded Medicaid rates are wildly insufficient to maintain the number of [assisted living] facilities we need in our communities," wrote **Stephanie Ober, Director of Resident Services at Sixth Avenue Senior Living Assisted Living Facility of Tacoma** in a [guest column](#) published by The News Tribune on Monday. "Long-term care communities like ours provide stability and preventative healthcare that breaks the cycle of over-reliance on emergency rooms and crisis centers." In a [jointly authored guest column](#) for the State Standard, **Alicia Harris (SEIU 775 represented certified nursing assistant)** and **Dieu Dinh (chief executive officer at Hudson Bay Health and Rehabilitation in Vancouver)**, wrote that "rising costs affect everyone, but in health care systems like ours, we are unable to respond to our staff's need for higher wages or to increased food prices for residents' meals without the Legislature taking action."

The **Editorial Board of The Everett Herald** also highlighted the need for a sustainable investment in long-term care in their [editorial](#) published in February: "While state lawmakers in [recent years have addressed concerns](#) that improved pay for those providing care — in particular at skilled nursing facilities and assisted-living centers — that need has been

largely met in piecemeal fashion, dependent on renewals, rather than a sustainable, long-term commitment to providing well-funded care.”

Information on these two types of long-term care:

Facts on Assisted Living

Assisted Living provides 24/7 supervision that includes housekeeping, daily personal care, intermittent nursing, medication assistance, social activities, transportation support and meals. Those in Assisted Living often live in private apartments. Older adults in Assisted Living are:

- 30% are 74-84 years old, 55% are 85+
- 85% require medication assistance (avg. of 12-15 daily medications)
- 54% have Alzheimer’s/dementia
- 72% identify as female
- 18.8% rely on Medicaid (access is low due to insufficient state investment in Medicaid)
 - o Private pay rates are increasing in order to subsidize low state Medicaid investments

Skilled Nursing Facilities

Skilled Nursing Facilities provide post-surgery therapies, transportation for on-going treatments (e.g. chemotherapy, dialysis), care for intense needs related to chronic medical treatment, diet (liquid, soft, tube), complex wound care, bowel/bladder programs, oxygen therapies and condition management (e.g. cancer, kidney failure, tracheotomy).

Adults in Skilled Nursing Facilities are:

- 77 years old, on average
- 59% have moderate/high cognitive impairment, 42% diagnosed with Alzheimer’s/dementia
- 32% are obese, 85% are bladder incontinent, 70% are bowel incontinent, 75% have hypertension and 28% have congestive heart failure
- 17% are bedfast
- 7,800 residents rely on Medicaid

About Washington Health Care Association

Washington Health Care Association is a nonprofit professional association for the long-term care community in Washington, representing 156 Skilled Nursing and 404 Assisted Living providers across the state. In partnership with these member facilities and business partners, WHCA promotes and advocates for healthy, affordable and ethical long-term care at the state and federal levels. For more information, please visit whca.org.

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