



# Long-Term Care Issues in Brief

2025 Legislative Session

## WASHINGTON ASSISTED LIVING FACILITIES

### Background

The State Legislature has worked hard to invest in critical long-term care models. Unfortunately, sunsetting one-time investments, a worsening workforce shortage, unintended bureaucratic bottlenecks for certifying new home care aides and a **stubborn gap** between the level of Medicaid investment and the cost for providing care is undermining a sustainable future for assisted living care for low-income Washingtonians.

The disparity in Medicaid funding is particularly stark when compared to other residential settings providing long-term care services. Assisted Living Facilities receive a significantly lower percentage of estimated costs, putting them at a disadvantage despite serving a population with complex needs, including individuals requiring memory care or other specialized services, such as behavioral health care.

### 2025 Legislative Priorities

**In order to maintain and expand our state’s ability to care for those in need, in 2025 we urge the Legislature to:**

- **Continue efforts to improve funding for assisted living Medicaid care** by adopting the DSHS and Inslee budget proposals to improve funding for labor (from 82 to 95% of costs) and operations (from 68 to 75%).
- **Eliminate crippling testing and certification backlogs** at the Department of Health by permitting facility- and community-based training programs to administer Home Care Aide certification tests.
- **Modernize statutory language regarding medications assistance** with insulin in community-based settings to ensure that residents can receive assistance with new and different insulin delivery methods.

## CHRONICALLY UNDERFUNDED

While the Legislature has worked in recent years to invest in long-term care, a one-time patchwork of bridge funds in lieu of fully-funding Medicaid **has undermined the goal of a system of sustainable care** for many older adults.

For example, on June 30, 2025, a **one-time investment** to support assisted living centers supporting a disproportionate number of Medicaid clients **will expire**. That funding was a lifeline, and its loss will threaten care for hundreds.

This funding shortfall has **persisted since 2018** when the Legislature established a data-driven payment system designed to capture actual care costs.

Currently, the labor component of the assisted living rates **only covers 82% of costs**.

**Assisted Living Facilities need support to provide critical care**

Long-term care is a complex spectrum allowing each individual to receive reliable, effective care that best fits their needs. In promoting quality care and services, we advocate for state investments in assisted living that also support a nursing workforce providing care for our state’s older adults.

**For additional information, please contact:**

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### Who relies on Assisted Living Facilities?

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)
  - Private pay rates are increasing in order to subsidize low state Medicaid investments

### Workforce bottlenecks

In Assisted Living, **70% of all costs are labor** and current **Medicaid rates only cover 82%** of costs, increasing barriers for accessing care and increasing private rates to subsidize low Medicaid rates.

In Assisted Living, it takes state regulators **439 days to process applications for home care aides**, creating **a backlog of 26,570 applications**.

The Department of Health recommends moving home care aide certification testing to training programs; the Legislature can help advance this policy measure by supporting legislation to permit DSHS-approved trainers in facilities and communities to administer skills and written tests for home care aide candidates.

**“Our state should be proud of the investments that we have made to provide care for older adults.**

*As our population ages and the need increases, we cannot take our leadership for granted. We are proud to work alongside nurses, administrators and state leaders as partners in supporting effective, inclusive and viable long-term care in our state.”*

**– Carma Matti-Jackson,  
CEO, WHCA**

### Who provides care?

Long-term care relies on the trained expertise of health care professionals and licensed, regulated providers.

*“Investments in Assisted Living are direct investments in our local communities, economies, workers and health. Those who rely on Medicaid depend on adequate Assisted Living funding for their housing and food security.”*

**– Glen Melin,  
CEO, LeadingAge WA**

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