

Aging Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: SB-1279

Title: AN ACT CONCERNING NURSING HOME STAFFING RATIOS.

Vote Date: 3/4/2025

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute

PH Date: 2/20/2025

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Aging Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

The legislation increases minimum nurse staffing levels in nursing home from 3 hours to 3.6 hours beginning on July 1, 2026, and from 3.6 hours to 4.1 hours in July 1, 2028, and it removes the ability of nursing homes to proportionally adjust their minimum social worker staffing based on the number of residents and makes a violation of staffing requirements a class B violation. A sufficient amount of direct care for nursing home residents is critical to ensuring their safety. The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) recommends a minimum of 4.1 hours of direct care per resident. This bill aims to protect nursing home residents by bringing us closer to that standard.

JFS Language (LCO 5816) This change strikes the increase from 3.6 to 4.1 hours and the delineation of the hours among different types of nurses and leaves it at a general 3.6 hours.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Dept of Social Services, Ms. Andrea Barton Reeves, Commissioner: The increases in minimum staffing levels will result in significant unbudgeted cost increase to the state and we note that mandating higher minimum staffing levels runs counter to the acuity-based reimbursement system which recognizes that nursing homes service lower acuity residents will not require the same staffing levels as those serving higher acuity residents. Connecticut's acuity-based reimbursement model became fully operational on July 1, 2024, and we are seeing shifts in spending as nursing homes are taking more acute residents. The goal of the system is to divert Medicaid spending to direct care in support of resident care and services. Because of this and other issues the Dept. must **oppose** the bill.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Dept. of Aging and Disability Services, Ms. Mairead Painter, State Long-Term Care Ombudsman:

She offers her **support** of this proposal indicating that the bill moves the state closer to the federal standard with the initial increase to 3.6 hours in 2026 to 4.1 hours in 2028. The most important part of the bill is the introduction of clear accountability measures that ensure that violations of staffing requirements are treated seriously.

AARP Connecticut, Ms. Natalie Shurtleff, Associate State Director, Advocacy and Community Outreach:

They **support** the committees' efforts to ensure adequate staffing ratios in the states nursing homes. Connecticut's vulnerable seniors deserve adequate staffing to ensure that they get basic care.

Connecticut Legal Services, Ms. Jean Mills Aranha, Attorney: They strongly **support** this proposal. Adequate staffing in nursing homes means better quality of care and reduced incidents of abuse and neglect of residents as many studies have shown. They believe that passage of this bill will improve Connecticut's care of its nursing home residents.

Statewide Coalition of Presidents of Residents Councils:

Apple Rehab, Hewett Rehab, Mr. John Balisciano, President

West Side Care Center, Mr. Robert Willis, President

Pendleton Rehab and Health Care, Ms. Jeanette Sullivan-Martinez, President

They **support** this legislation and say that implementation of minimum staffing ratios is essential to ensuring that residents receive the quality care they deserve. Adequate staffing allows for more personalized and timely care, it reduces the burden on aides which decreases burnout and turnover and will foster a more positive and supportive environment within the facility.

Pafy Care Manager, Ms. Sharon Gauthier, Nurse Advocate: She is in full **support** of this bill. She shared some of her experiences in her testimony when staffing levels are too low.

Mr. John Stavola, Nursing Home Resident, Whitney Rehabilitation Care Center,

Hamden: He offers his **support** for this bill. He believes in holding owners of nursing homes financially accountable and protecting the rights of all nursing home residents, including himself.

Home Matters Caregiving, Ms. Asha Samal, Owner: She **supports** this bill and any legislation that protects the rights of seniors.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

Connecticut Association of Health Care Facilities, Mr. Matt Barrett, President:

They testified in **opposition** to this proposal. Dictating detailed percentages of care in each of the direct care categories undermines quality care by eliminating the flexibility that the nursing home professionals have under current law to assign staff in the percentages that have been determined to meet the care needs of their resident population. They also caution that because of the ongoing staffing shortages nursing homes will need to rely on temporary

nursing staffing agencies to comply with these highly prescriptive standards. He points out that nursing homes under current federal and state law must provide sufficient staffing to meet the care needs of the residents with significant consequences in the existing DPH regulatory survey and certification process.

LeadingAge, Connecticut, Ms. Mag Morelli, President: She presented testimony in **opposition** to this legislation. They share that state's goal to ensure that the states older adults receive quality nursing home care and understand that maintaining appropriate staffing patterns is essential to achieving that goal. They object to the proposal to create separate and specific minimum ratios of staff based on licensure and certification status. They provided a more detailed explanation in their written testimony.

**Reported by: Richard Ferrari, Assistant Clerk
Alexander Mercier, Clerk**

Date: 3/12/2025