

STATE REPRESENTATIVE

KATHY BERNIER

Testimony on Assembly 249 / Senate Bill 212

Assembly Committee on Health

Wednesday, November 13, 2013

Chairman Severson and Committee Members,

Thank you for holding this Public Hearing today, providing the opportunity for me to speak in favor of Assembly Bill 249.

This proposal addresses an unintended consequence arising from Wisconsin's training requirements for Certified Nursing Assistants. It strikes a balance between the high standards we hold our health care workers to and the crucial need for qualified CNAs in health care facilities across the state.

As we all are aware in our own districts, there is an on-going need for a competent and well-trained workforce to provide excellent care for the elderly, ill and disabled. Of all the categories of health care professionals, Certified Nursing Assistant is one of the fastest growing job classifications; yet this position is also one the most demanding and has one of the highest turnover rates. Since many CNAs currently in the job force are often training for more advanced medical degrees, there is a continual need for new qualified workers.

As the job market for health care workers becomes tighter across the nation, Wisconsin needs to become more competitive in attracting qualified workers. CNAs who live near the Wisconsin border, or who consider relocating to Wisconsin, can be put off by the fact that the 75 hours of training, required for licensure in surrounding states and many other states, is not sufficient in Wisconsin. To continue in this profession here would require individuals start the training process over and complete Wisconsin's required 120 hours of CNA training.

Many times these people are looking for employment as soon as possible and re-training can prove cost prohibitive and time consuming. When other employment opportunities are available, they can simply choose to leave the field altogether and work elsewhere. This bill, modifying training requirements for already certified CNAs, is a practical solution that will help us meet these critical health care needs while ensuring our high standards for care are met.

Instead of sitting in a classroom repeating basic skills training that have already been mastered, CNAs who have been licensed in other states can get the additional training needed to bring them into compliance with Wisconsin's standards in less time and with less expense. The additional 45 hours of instruction creates a "bridge" between their previous 75 or more hours of instruction and the 120 hours required by the State of Wisconsin.

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I worked as a Certified Nursing Assistant, as did my daughter. I can tell you from personal experience that it is hard work that demands knowledge, skill and compassion. CNAs successfully completing training in other states and working for any length of time in this field already have these basic skills. What is required, under this proposal, to continue working in this profession in Wisconsin is completing of a "bridge" course to meet Wisconsin standards.

The proposal allows already certified CNAs the opportunity, while making certain that Wisconsin's high standards are met, a reasonable path to get into the workforce providing quality care for patients in our communities. It also allows these hard-working and compassionate individuals the chance to provide a living for themselves and their families sooner rather than later.

Let's remove this roadblock and encourage qualified CNAs to join our workforce. We can expand the pool of available workers while, maintaining our high standards of training, we enhance the quality of life for the most fragile and needy among us.

Thank you again, Mr. Chairman, for scheduling AB 249 for Public Hearing this morning. I would be happy to respond to any questions.



State Senator Sheila Harsdorf

Date: November 13, 2013
To: Assembly Committee on Health
Fr: Senator Sheila Harsdorf
Re: Assembly Bill 249—Instructional programs for nurse aides

Dear Chair Severson and Committee Members,

Thank you for holding a public hearing on Assembly Bill 249 (AB 249), which would allow the Department of Health Services (DHS) to approve instructional programs for nurse aides, also known as certified nursing assistants or CNAs, who have received CNA training outside of Wisconsin and are seeking employment in Wisconsin as a CNA. I appreciate the opportunity to speak in support of passage of AB 249.

Federal law requires that CNAs receive a minimum of 75 hours of training. However, individual states are allowed to set more stringent training standards. Wisconsin currently exceeds the federal requirement for CNA instructional programs. In 2008, Wisconsin increased its training requirement from 75 hours to require that CNA training programs provide at least 120 hours of training, which includes a minimum of 32 hours of clinical training.

While Wisconsin requires 120 hours of training, many states do not have this increased requirement for CNA training and use the federal standard of 75 hours. Of our neighboring states, only Illinois requires the same amount of training hours as Wisconsin. Minnesota, Michigan, and Iowa all require 75 hours of training.

AB 249 would allow individuals who have successfully completed training in another state as a CNA to combine previous training with DHS approved instructional programs in order to make up the difference in training hours required in order to work as a CNA in Wisconsin. Currently, a CNA who has received training in a state with lower requirements than Wisconsin is required to start from the beginning and complete a training program in Wisconsin for the full 120 hours.

The service CNAs provide is an important level of care in our healthcare system. Both nursing homes and home care agencies rely on the care that CNAs provide. This bill increases access to the nurse aide profession by providing an opportunity for CNAs relocating to Wisconsin or those living in border communities to make up the difference in training hours required in order to be employed in Wisconsin as a CNA. Given the growing need for skilled health care workers, particularly nurses, this legislation is a common-sense reform to state regulations that will help expand the pool of qualified workers for open positions in our state.

I urge your support for this legislation in order to make it easier for individuals from out-of-state to be employed as CNAs in Wisconsin. Thank you again for allowing me to speak in favor of the passage of AB 249. I would welcome the opportunity to respond to any questions.



State of Wisconsin
Department of Health Services

Scott Walker, Governor
Kitty Rhoades, Secretary

November 13, 2013

Assembly Committee on Health

2013 AB 249 relating to: instructional programs for nurse aids and granting rule-making authority

WI Department of Health Services Position: testifying for information only

My name is Renee O'Day and I am the Assistant Deputy Secretary of the Department of Health Services. I am testifying today for informational purposes only regarding AB 249.

Currently, nurse aides employed in Wisconsin are required to complete 120 hours of instruction through a Department of Health Services-approved nurse aide training program and pass a competency examination. Federal law requires a minimum of 75 hours of training to become a nurse aide; as a result, certain other states have less stringent instructional requirements to receive nurse aide certification. Nurse aides who complete less than 120 hours of instruction in another state must complete the entire 120 hour DHS-approved training and pass a competency examination to work as a nurse aide in Wisconsin.

AB 249 allows DHS to approve instructional programs that, when combined with instruction from another state, are substantially equivalent to the comprehensive instruction currently available through a DHS-approved program. DHS will need to undergo rulemaking to develop certification requirements and a curriculum for the new program. DHS anticipates that the new curriculum would provide an additional 45 hours of training, which would "bridge" the gap between the minimum federal standard of 75 hours and the Wisconsin standard of 120 hours. Additionally, DHS will review program applications, provide initial and ongoing onsite monitoring, and conduct biannual reviews of the nurse aide curriculum. Oversight of the new "bridge" programs will require 1 additional nursing consultant FTE.

Finally, AB 249 may help Wisconsin-based private sector health care providers fill important job vacancies while maintaining quality of care.

November 8, 2013

The Honorable Erik Severson, Chairman and Committee Members
Committee on Health and Human Services
Wisconsin State Senate
Madison, WI

Re: In support of Assembly Bill 249, Relating to: instructional programs for nurse aides and granting rule-making authority.

Chairman Severson and Members of the Committee,

As a Registered Nurse and concerned citizen, I would like the committee to recognize the positive implications that this piece of legislation will have on the citizens of Wisconsin.

The population is aging and as people live longer, competent care for chronic conditions is needed to provide safe and effective care to the most vulnerable citizens of our communities. The health care system relies heavily on RNs and the aids that assist them in delivering care. Nurse aids will continue to be in high demand as we strive to improve the quality of people's lives not only in long term care facilities but also in individual's homes which is proving to deliver high customer satisfaction as well as being the most cost effective care deliverable.

The State of Wisconsin requires nurse aids of complete 120 hours of instruction. While Wisconsin is not the state that requires the highest number of hours, it is one of only 12 states that require 120 hours or more. This limits the number of potential nurse aids who could easily cross the border and begin working. It would not serve the interest of providing quality care to lower the standard of 120 hours, but providing a means to acquire the additional hours necessary to meet the standard shows foresight.

Currently, if a nurse aid would like to travel to Wisconsin to work or if they move here from another state and that person does not have the 120 hours of required instructions, there is no opportunity to meet the requirement without repeating the whole 120 hours of instructions. This is a road block for potential employees in a time when nurse aids demand will outstrip the supply and also at a time when job growth is goal for the current Governor, Scott Walker.

By supporting Assembly Bill 249, Wisconsin will provide a practical road map that will continue to deliver high quality nurse aids. Also, Wisconsin will once again show leadership and vision since no other state has developed this opportunity for such crucial members of our workforce.

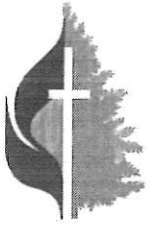
Thank you for this opportunity to submit my written testimony in support of Assembly Bill 249.

Respectfully,

Sue Irle, MSN, RN

PO box 131

Star Prairie, WI 54026



Christian Community Homes and Services, Inc.

September 17, 2013

Senator Sheila Harsdorf
Room 18 South
State Capitol
P.O. Box 7882
Madison, WI 53707-7882

Dear Sheila,

Thank you for authoring SB212. This is a much needed and very welcome initiative on behalf of Wisconsin's western border counties who compete with Minnesota for Nursing Assistant employees. As you likely know, the health care job market is tightening up, especially for Certified Nursing Assistants. We see this effort as potentially very helpful to our facilities in both St. Croix and Polk counties. Approval of SB212 will make a fundamental improvement to Wisconsin's competitive position for this increasingly important employee category.

Since Minnesota's educational standard for CNA's has been different than Wisconsin's, many potential CNA's have chosen (I suggest mostly by necessity) to become certified in Minnesota. Without this change, Wisconsin clearly loses some good workers to the less restrictive training standard.

The 45-hour bridge training is a great idea and will mitigate a lot of this issue. However, I wish to go on record in support of a potential improvement amendment that I believe is consistent with the goal of SB212.

As a member of the board of directors of LeadingAge Wisconsin, which represents the state's not-for-profit long-term care providers, I would like to request your consideration of a "friendly" amendment to SB 212 recommended by our Board which would exempt from the "bridge" training requirements nurse aides that were certified in another state if they also have been employed as CNAs in that other state for at least 2,080 hours (1 year) in the past 24 months (2 years).

I believe the actual work experience will be as valuable to the CNA and would enhance the goal of SB212 to keep the very best workers in Wisconsin's health care facilities.

Thank you and thanks to your colleagues in the Senate for their support of this valuable employment initiative.

Sincerely,

Dan C. Goodier
Executive Director

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& Christian Community
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TO: Representative Erik Severson, Chairperson and Members of the Assembly Health Committee
FROM: Gina Dennik-Champion, MSN, RN, MSHA
Wisconsin Nurses Association Executive Director
DATE: November 13, 2013
RE: Support of AB 249/SB 212 - instructional programs for nurse aides and granting rule-making authority.

On behalf of the Wisconsin Nurses Association, I would like to thank you, Chairperson Severson for holding this public hearing on AB 249 which addresses changes to Wisconsin State Statute Chapter 146 by creating a system for articulation for Certified Nurse Assistant training program requirements. AB 249 and the companion bill SB 212 provide for an efficient and effective pathway for out-of-state Certified Nurse Assistants to enter Wisconsin's caregiver workforce. The Wisconsin Nurses Association had the opportunity to meet with Senator Harsdorf and provide feedback as part of her bill development process on SB 212. We are very pleased and we thank Representative Bernier for introducing AB 249 in the Assembly. AB 249/SB 212 will provide the following benefits:

- Supports Wisconsin's 120 hours of instruction to work as a Nurse Assistant in Wisconsin.
- Allows for the Certified Nurse Assistant student to complete only the additional 45 hours of required instruction versus repeating 75 hours of instruction already completed, passed, and paid for.
- The Nurse Assistant training agency must test for competency, knowledge and skills that are required to work in the role as a nurse assistant in Wisconsin.
- The Nurse Assistant will enter Wisconsin's workforce sooner by completing and passing only the additional required course work.
- Nurse Assistants are in high demand. This legislation will help address the shortages that exist in the Nurse Assistant workforce.

AB 249 possesses the necessary structure to support quality care and services that these important caregivers provide. It also supports the Registered Nurse who is responsible for delegating and supervising the assigned nursing tasks to the nurse assistant providing patient care.

WNA again appreciates Representative Bernier for introducing this legislation and for those members of the legislature who have signed on in support. We ask that members of the Assembly Health Committee support AB 249 by voting yes for passage out of your committee. Thank you again Chairperson Severson for holding this hearing and for allowing WNA to submit testimony in support of AB 249.

GUNDERSEN HEALTH SYSTEM®

November 11, 2013

The Honorable Erik Severson, MD
Committee on Health
Wisconsin State Assembly
Madison, WI 53708

RE: Gundersen Supports SB 212/AB 249 Relating to CNA Training Requirements

Dear Chairman Severson & Committee Members:

I am writing on behalf of Gundersen Health System to share our support for Senate Bill 212/Assembly Bill 249 relating to instructional programs for certified nursing assistants (CNAs) and granting rule-making authority.

Gundersen is an integrated health system headquartered in La Crosse with hospitals, clinics, health plan, air and ground ambulance and medical education programs serving the tri-state region of Wisconsin, Minnesota and Iowa along the rural stretches of the Mississippi River. We collaborate with a variety of nursing programs, including Western Technical College, Viterbo University, University of Wisconsin and others, to help train and develop our state's healthcare workforce.

CNAs play a significant role in the delivery of healthcare at Gundersen. We attract CNAs from a variety of states who are interested in practicing at a multi-state, integrated health system. However, we have found that the training requirements vary across states, making certification in Wisconsin an additional challenge for those already certified in other states. Wisconsin requires more training than the federal government or the states of Minnesota or Iowa where Gundersen operates and 75 hours is the standard.

Gundersen supports this legislation because it provides the opportunity for CNAs from other states like Iowa and Minnesota to bridge the difference with a Wisconsin-approved instructional program that will minimize the need to repeat training hours already completed. We hope to establish a bridge program if one is approved.

We encourage the Committee and Legislature to support this legislation and are willing to be a resource for any questions.

Sincerely,



Eric C. Tempelis
Director of Government Relations

WISCONSIN HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION, INC.



Date: November 13, 2013

To: Members of the Assembly Committee on Health

From: Judy Warmuth, Vice President – Workforce Development
Kyle O'Brien, Vice President – Government Relations

Re: Wisconsin Hospital Association Testimony Supporting AB 249

The Wisconsin Hospital Association (WHA) supports Assembly Bill 249 (AB 249) which allows for the creation of a 'bridge' program for Certified Nurse Aides (CNA). We understand that this legislation would allow individuals who have successfully completed CNA training in another state to combine that previous training with a DHS approved 'bridge' program in order to be certified in Wisconsin. Currently, a CNA who has received training in a state with lower requirements than Wisconsin is not allowed to carryover any training or experience for the purposes of receiving a state certification. This bill will allow experienced and qualified CNAs to quickly meet the same standards as required by the state for current CNAs in Wisconsin.

Nurse aides are an important component of care delivery in hospitals and in other health care settings. Many individual CNAs employed by hospitals are temporarily in the role while studying to be nurses or other members of the health care team. These students quickly exit the CNA role when they complete their programs. The result is that health facilities must continually recruit and hire individuals into CNA positions. For hospitals that provide service along or near Wisconsin borders, the current situation inhibits a health care facility's ability to recruit individuals that were trained in Minnesota or Michigan.

In 2012, Wisconsin hospitals employed over 7,000 individuals as Certified Nurse Aides. That same year, the WHA vacancy survey revealed 435 vacant CNA positions in Wisconsin hospitals. The change proposed by AB 249 creating a shortened course to prepare CNAs that do not meet the current Wisconsin education requirement from other states could allow for these positions to be more easily filled. It would also result in more individuals being employed in the secure, family supporting jobs that hospitals provide.

Wisconsin hospitals are committed to providing high quality care for our patients and families. AB 249 would help hospitals secure the qualified CNAs they need to accomplish this mission.

Thank you for your time and please let us know of any questions that you may have.



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Voice: 608/266-7826 Fax: 608/267-3906



Testimony on Assembly Bill 249 Assembly Committee on Health

November 13, 2013

Todd Costello, Executive Director
Community Living Alliance and Chair of the Wisconsin Long-term Care Workforce Alliance
608-242-8335, Ext. 1372
costellot@clanet.org

Good morning Chairperson Severson and committee members. My name is Todd Costello, and I am writing in support of Assembly Bill 249 on behalf of the Wisconsin Long-term Care Workforce Alliance, the Wisconsin Personal Services Association and the Survival Coalition of Disability Organizations. We are grateful to Representative Bernier for introducing Assembly Bill 249, and we are pleased to see the committee taking an interest in the needs of the long-term care workforce.

Wisconsin's long-term care workforce consists of Personal Care Aides, Home Health Aides and Nursing Aides who care for the elderly and people with disabilities. It totals over 90,000 workers, making it one of the largest occupational groupings in the state. Certified Nursing Assistants make up a large portion of the long-term care workforce, totaling over 37,000 CNAs in 2012.

Through my work as Chair of the Wisconsin Long Term Care Workforce Alliance, I have significant exposure to the Certified Nursing Assistant profession, as CNAs play a crucial role in the long-term care workforce. In its *Olmstead* decision, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that individuals with disabilities have a right to live in the community. Many people with disabilities, as well as the elderly, rely on Certified Nursing Assistants, Personal Care Workers and Home Health Aides to live independently and in the setting of their choice.

Certified Nursing Assistants are one of the fastest-growing occupations in the state and the Paraprofessional Healthcare Institute (PHI) projects the occupation to grow by 17% between 2010 and 2020. Moreover, Wisconsin's Workforce and Labor Market Information System, WORKNet, projects an average of 1,100 CNA job openings per year between the same timeframe.

As detailed by the recent federal Commission on Long-term Care report, the long-term care workforce will face serious challenges over the next decade with demand for long-term care workers set to increase dramatically while the field struggles with worker shortages and high turnover rates. According to the report, "Studies of turnover have found rates of 44-46 percent

for home care workers, 49 percent for certified nurse assistants (CNAs) in nursing homes, and 26 percent among CNAs in assisted living facilities.” Meanwhile, the Department of Health Services projects that Wisconsin’s elderly population will grow by over 100,000 people between 2010 and 2015, one-third of whom will require long-term care.

Long-term care workers will play an important role in caring for Wisconsin’s aging population, but the field is faced with a growing shortage of skilled workers and serious recruitment challenges. Finding well-trained individuals to fill these positions will be incredibly important for both strengthening Wisconsin’s economy and ensuring that individuals with disabilities and the elderly receive quality care.

Assembly Bill 249 is an important first step in addressing the challenges facing the long-term care workforce, as it makes it easier to recruit and hire employees who may have received their training in another state. We hope this Committee and the Legislature continues to invest in and support a quality long-term care workforce, and look forward to continuing this dialogue in the future.

Thank you for your time.