

Felicia Sherlin
Senate Medicaid Committee
Interested Party Testimony HB 33
May 11, 2023

Chair Romanchuk, Vice Chair Wilson, Ranking Member Ingram, Members of the Senate Medicaid Committee thank you for the opportunity to provide Interested Party Testimony on HB 33.

My name is Felicia Sherlin, and I am a board certified Registered Nurse in Ohio. I have recently made the difficult decision to leave my profession due to a number of concerns about the direction the nursing is headed and how it's being handled. Currently nursing care and services are only reimbursed as a paraprofessional care. I AM NOT a paraprofessional! I have an advanced degree, a board certification and nearly 30 years of experience in care and critical thinking in the application of healthcare.

The unfortunate reality is our population is aging and will require more and more care. There is also a rising rate of children with special needs (according to the US Census, 2019). Many of these children also have nursing care and respite needs that are currently going unmet due to the nursing shortage. With an aging nursing force that is leaving and retiring at an unprecedented rate, this is rapidly becoming crisis. We are on the cusp of collapse since we are already not able to meet the care that these patients and their families qualify for and are promised. Our patients (your constituents) deserve the best nursing care to enable them to remain at home rather than a facility and to live their fullest lives!

The aftermath of COVID's devastating effects on recruitment and retention for all healthcare workers has been especially noticeable in nursing since as the backbone of 24 hour inpatient care. With the nursing shortage there are beds, whole wards and even entire facilities that have been forced to close nationwide. One of the main reason people leave where I am currently employed is pay inequity. If agencies like Medicare and Medicaid paid nursing professionals as the professionals they are and for the critical thinking and physical tasks that are required as part of the job, it would be more enticing for the future generations to consider this profession. As pay for the services is boosted, it would allow agencies employing nurses providing that care to be reimbursed more competitively. As those positions offer more pay it would entice private insurers to make sure they are standardized with CMS and Medicaid coverage. This again will allow pay for other agencies to have more room for increased pay for nurses. The more they are reimbursed for nursing care equals more dollars available to pay high quality qualified nurses. This is the way we recruit more nurses and ensure they feel appreciated for the hard work they are providing. I am asking for efforts to increase pay and reimbursement for nursing care to avoid the impending crisis with this shortage of nursing staff!

Thank you for your time and attention,

Felicia Sherlin