

# The Academy of Senior Health Sciences Inc.



Testimony on H.B. 461 before The House Economic & Workforce Development Committee

November 17, 2021

Submitted by Chris Murray, CEO, The Academy of Senior Health Sciences, Inc.

Chair Edwards, Vice Chair Powell, Ranking Minority Member Upchurch, thank you for the opportunity today to provide testimony on H.B. 461.

Nursing homes have been at the epicenter of the battle against COVID-19. Providers have been struggling for almost two years to protect their residents and staff from the harmful and sometimes deadly effects of the virus. We are grateful for the efforts of the frontline staff during these stressful and grueling times. We do have an opportunity to aid providers by providing them more financial support. H.B. 461 would use federal coronavirus dollars to that end.

Nursing homes have been under financial stress since the start of the pandemic. The cost of doing business for a provider has increased because of the following: personal protective equipment, “hazard” pay, use of agency staff, testing, data submission, and increased regulations. These costs have continued throughout the pandemic and in some cases, such as staffing costs, are increasing rapidly. Toss in a decline in occupancy and general inflation and it is a recipe for financial distress.

Early financial support from both the state and federal government CARES Act have helped providers continue to provide vital services to their residents. The emergence of the Delta Variant has shown that the battle is not over. The additional costs will continue for some time, thus creating the need for more financial support.

H.B. 461 will allow nursing home Medicaid providers to focus on what is most important: providing care and meeting the needs of residents. Providers attempting to navigate the difficult and sometimes tragic currents of the pandemic should not have to worry about cost cutting or sacrificing quality care to make ends meet.

Thank you for your time today and I will be happy to address any questions.