

## Sound the Alarm! Safe Staffing Now!

Nursing home workers and families of nursing home residents have been sounding the alarm for decades about the need for better staffing. Low staffing in nursing homes often means that workers are forced to manage care for dozens of patients at a time. As a union representing more than 50,000 health care workers, including workers in nursing homes, assisted-living facilities, and those who provide in-home care, we know the tremendous challenges and chronic staffing shortages that these workers have faced. Major concerns cited by workers from chronic understaffing are: workplace violence, undue risk of injury or illness, chronic fatigue, and mental health strain.

All resulting from lack of support and resources to provide the quality care nursing staff know they can provide. Nursing home staff turnover is greater than fifty-percent! ([usw.to/4oe](http://usw.to/4oe)) There are many factors that lead to facilities having problems with recruitment and retention of nursing staff: low wages, lack of benefits, lack of easy access to training, heavy workloads, and limited career options. More than 90% of nursing home workers are female, 58% are persons of color and 20% are women of color. Approximately 12% of these workers live in poverty, and 41% live in low-income households. Among Black and Hispanic female direct care workers, about 50% earn less than \$15 per hour. We can do better for the workers who take care of our loved ones.

### WHY SAFE STAFFING MATTERS

- Today, more than seven in ten nursing homes staff below the level experts have determined is necessary to avoid harm to residents.
- More than 150 studies over decades have documented the strong positive impact of additional nurse staffing on the care process, meaning better care of residents, improving job quality for nursing home workers, fewer on the job injuries and less worker burnout.
- Efforts to increase wages should not only consider providing competitive wages, but a living wage. A market-based measure of basic needs that considers local costs for food, housing, health insurance, childcare, and other necessities like clothing and personal care items.



### What's Next

In February 2022, President Biden announced a major regulatory initiative designed to improve care quality and working conditions for nursing staff in facilities. This initiative could protect millions of nursing home residents and improve the lives of some 600,000 nursing home workers. The announcement included a pledge to set a national minimum staffing standard for nursing facilities that participate in Medicare and Medicaid.

The administration is expected to propose a minimum staffing standard this summer. This is a once-in-decades opportunity to set national staffing standards.

**Stay tuned to Rapid Response for how you can help keep our priorities intact!**