

Reps. Subeck, Brostoff: Democrats introduce CNA Pay Act to address nursing aide shortage

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Democrats Introduce CNA Pay Act to Address Nursing Aide Shortage

MADISON – Today, Representative Lisa Subeck (D-Madison) and Representative Jonathan Brostoff (D-Milwaukee) introduced the *CNA Pay Act* which would increase wages and expand access to training for Certified Nursing Assistants (CNA) working on the frontlines of long-term care and nursing facilities. The proposal comes after yesterday's passage by Assembly Republicans of AB 432, which would diminish nursing care quality by reducing the required number of hours of training a CNA is required to complete. With 11,500 currently vacant personal care worker positions and demand for CNAs in Wisconsin projected to grow exponentially due to growth in the aging population, immediate action is needed to address the workforce shortage.

“Democrats would increase wages and expand access to training for CNAs who are on the front lines providing daily care to our most vulnerable residents,” said Rep. Subeck. “The bill passed yesterday by Assembly Republicans will diminish the quality of care. Instead, we can and should make CNA training more accessible and affordable and ensure these caregivers earn a living wage on which they can support their own families.”

“For people with lower incomes, the frail elderly and people with disabilities both the wage increase and the other financial incentives provided to CNAs is of crucial importance because their current income is so low that there is a huge shortage of workers in this very important field,” said Barbara Vedder of Madison who depends

on personal care services. “I want to continue to be able to live and be actively involved in the community and the only way to do so is if I’m able to find people to help me with the most basic of needs in order for me to function on a daily basis.” According to a joint report by the Wisconsin Health Care Association, Wisconsin Center for Assisted Living, Wisconsin Assisted Living Association, LeadingAge Wisconsin, and Residential Services Association of Wisconsin, the median starting wage for personal caregivers in Wisconsin is \$10.75 per hour. The same report indicates that the median wage paid by non-health care employers for unskilled, entry level workers is \$1.25 more than the wage paid to caregivers. The rate of CNAs leaving the profession continue to increase as they leave the industry for jobs with higher wages and better benefits.

“CNA work is hard work, physically, mentally, and emotionally,” said Madi Vander Hill, a CNA in Dane County. “In order for us to take care of ourselves and our families, and stay in this profession longer, we need a living wage for all CNAs. Once we pay the tuition for the class and certifying exam we would expect to receive a wage that makes that expense worthwhile, which is not the case for many CNAs.” “Too often CNAs have to work two jobs just to get by, and the bill passed yesterday by Assembly Republicans does nothing to change that,” said Rep. Brostoff. “We have a responsibility to provide living wages, fair benefits and access to training for these frontline healthcare workers, who take care of our most vulnerable friends and family members.”

LRB-4743 would create a tax credit for tuition costs for CNAs. After working for 1 year as a CNA, an individual can claim a one-time \$1500 capped refundable tax credit for the cost of CNA training.

LRB-4744 would provide \$500,000 annually to give grants to technical colleges in order to expand access to CNA training in underserved areas.

LRB-4745 would increase the Medicaid reimbursement rate for personal care services by accepting the Federal Medicaid expansion dollars. The bill requires that the reimbursement increase go directly to increasing wages of frontline caretakers. Copies of the bills are attached.

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