

# Wisconsin Assisted Living Association: Commends Governor Walker budget support to address caregiver shortage crisis

Posted on Monday, Sep 25, 2017

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The Wisconsin Assisted Living Association (WALA) wishes to thank Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker for maintaining and supporting the legislature's budget provision to invest \$25 million GPR (approx. \$60 million all-funds) in the 2017-19 biennial budget to fund increases for the direct care and services component of the Family Care capitation rates. This action will target critically needed increases to address the long-term care workforce crisis.

*"The world of Wisconsin's Assisted Living appreciates Governor Walker's recognition of the dire caregiver staffing situation and supporting the additional Family Care funding for those direct caregivers," said Jim Murphy, executive director of the Wisconsin Assisted Living Association.*

Family Care is a long-term care program that helps frail elders and adults with disabilities. As of September 1, 2016, there were a total of 44,032 Family Care enrollees, and as statewide expansion occurs over the next two years the number of enrollees is expected to approach 50,000. ([Source](#))

Meanwhile, Wisconsin faces a crisis in the shortage of available front-line caregivers. [The Long-Term Care Workforce Crisis: A 2016 Report](#), the largest survey of Wisconsin's assisted living and long-term care facility providers in the state's history, included the following key findings:

- Approximately **87,000** Wisconsin residents live in 4,284 long-term care facilities. (Source: WI DHS, DQA, State of Assisted Living – CY 2015, March 2016) Residents living in these facilities rely on an estimated 73,700 caregivers. The number of Wisconsin residents living in long-term care facilities has **grown 18%** since 2003.
- Wisconsin is experiencing high levels of caregiver vacancy rates in long-term

care facilities: average caregiver **vacancy rates are 14.5%**, with **1 in 4 providers** experiencing vacancy rates of **20% and higher**. There are an estimated **11,500** vacant caregiver positions in Wisconsin assisted living and nursing facilities.

- Wisconsin's providers are facing major problems finding applicants and qualified caregivers: more than **30%** of providers felt they were unable to compete with other employers; nearly **50%** had no applicants for vacant caregiver positions; **70%** said there were no qualified applicants for caregiver openings; **18%** have been forced to deny admissions due to the lack of caregivers.
- There is a significant wage disparity between people working as trained personal caregivers and unskilled entry-level workers taking jobs at gas stations, big-box stores, and fast food restaurants: providers reported a median hourly starting wage for personal caregivers of **\$10.75** compared to **\$12.00** for local, non-health care employers seeking unskilled, entry-level workers.
- There has been an exodus of caregivers to jobs outside of healthcare: providers report widespread use of overtime, double shifts and other strategies to deal with scheduling gaps; **4 of 5 caregivers** who took jobs outside of health care left for better pay, better benefits and/or better hours.