



WALA Awards Legislators for Support to Address Caregiver Shortage Crisis

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MADISON: The Wisconsin Assisted Living Association (WALA) honored Senator Leah Vukmir (R – Brookfield) and Representative Mike Rohrkaste (R – Neenah) with the WALA Champion in Public Service award. We honor these two legislators for recognizing the long-term caregiver shortage crisis and for fighting to seek an investment of approximately \$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.

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:



Senator Leah Vukmir at WALA's Autumn Golf Classic



Representative Mike Rohrkaste at State Capitol Office

- 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. 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.

About the Wisconsin Assisted Living Association (WALA) ewala.org

WALA – Wisconsin Assisted Living Association is the premier statewide association for Wisconsin's assisted living industry. WALA represents the majority of Wisconsin's assisted living providers and their residents, with over 1,500 members. WALA promotes standards of quality care and provides valuable member services to organizations providing assisted living services. WALA leads the profession with educational programs, professional products and tools, and other member quality resources.

WALA – Wisconsin Assisted Living Association

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