

March 22, 2022

RE: HF3405

Dear Committee:

I am Char Christenson, Hubbard County Commissioner, and I am writing this letter on behalf of Minnesota Rural Counties.

Hubbard County owns a long term care facility in Park Rapids. Currently we are running at an average loss of \$150,000 per month due to our census being at 50% which is because of staffing shortages. The county has so far given the facility \$2m from our ARPA dollars to keep the doors open and there is no end in sight for continual monthly running in the red. Our commissioner board has some tough decisions to make about the future of our facility if we cannot turn the census around. There are people waiting to move in but cannot due to staffing shortages.

Currently there are 364 long term care facilities across the state of MN with a staffing shortage of 23,000 workers to cover all the open positions. (Note these staffing shortages are just for the state of MN.) This bill offers NO solution to the current staffing problem. In fact it will increase the staffing shortages. We do not need more regulations. Long term care facilities are second only to nuclear power plants in the United States in regulations and this bill throws more regulations into the mix without a solution. The further down the chain the long term care facility is from those making decisions the slower and less effective the decisions become.

Concerns about the bill:

- Long term care facilities are already heavily regulated. What qualifies the 9 member board to further regulate (what can possible be missing in the thick manual of regulations already in the manual) from a distance and take away local control from our county board and/or the private ownership of the facility from making good decision that help make their facility run successfully?
- We already have a state agency that regulates. What would qualify the 9 member board to make better informed decisions that would trump the agency's rulings?
- Long term care facilities are already regulated in training through current regulations and this bill complicates this process, taking staff away for further needed (?) training, training the 9 member board would determine what the content is and who would do the training. Residents of the facilities deserve care from the staff, not more time spent in training instead of caring for the residents.
- Employees already can bring legal action against a facility if they wish.

The CMS mandates created much of this mess and they have done nothing to fix the problem they created. Further regulations is not the answer. Moral is at an all-time low. Many have left the health care industry out of exhaustion and/or frustration with the mandates. This bill will put more pressure on an already stressed staff.

Instead of supporting this bill I urge you to consider how regulations can be eased some in the short term to maximize staff time to care for the residents. And explore what can you do to pressure the CMS mandates be removed.

Thank you for your time and I encourage you to bring forth solutions that do not involve further regulations/control. Long term care involves huge population and if long term care facilities are forced to close their doors there will be a much larger crisis to try and solve in addition to a severe disruption to people's lives who depend on the needed care.

Respectfully,

Char Christenson

Hubbard County Commissioner