

## **Support Essential Workers Emergency Leave Act**

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Elder Voice Family Advocates (Elder Voice) strongly supports HF 41, the Essential Workers Emergency Leave Act. These workers are protecting and caring for our loved ones in long-term care (LTC) facilities. The demands on these essential workers during this pandemic are enormous. We must give them the support needed to keep them protected and able to work in LTC. This can be accomplished, in part, by meeting their personal health needs with paid sick leave.

Elder Voice advocates for the safe, quality care of elders and vulnerable adults living in LTC. Staff are critically important to the quality care for our mothers, fathers and loved ones residing in these facilities. They depend on these workers for help in help in areas such as giving medications and help with feeding, bathing, dressing, toileting and much more.

The pandemic has prevented most families from entering many of the facilities to continue helping with the care of their family member, further increasing the demands on the staff. Without paid sick leave, these workers are often forced to continue working even if they are sick, putting the residents, other staff and themselves at significant risk of serious infection and continuing the spread of COVID-19.

Recruiting workers in long-term care has reached an emergency level. These are demanding jobs, with a high risk of getting infected with COVID-19. How can we attract and keep quality staff if they don't have the assurance that they can take emergency paid sick leave? They can work in many other jobs for better pay, reduced risk of infection and less stress.

Paid emergency sick leave is important and must be enacted to stabilize the long-term care workforce and acknowledge the demands in a pandemic environment on these workers.

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