



Date: May 21, 2018

To: Chairman Joseph F. Vitale, members of the Senate Health, Human Services and Senior Citizens Committee.

From: James W. McCracken, President & CEO

Cc: Elizabeth Mahn, Senate Democratic Committee Aide
John Gorman, Senate Republican Committee Aide
Margaret Roberts, OLS Committee Aide
Sarah Schmidt, OLS Committee Aide

Re: Testimony Opposing **S-1612**

Good afternoon Chairman Vitale and Members of the Committee:

I want to thank you for this opportunity to testify before you concerning **S-1612**, legislation that would mandate resident-to-certified assistant ratios in New Jersey nursing homes. A brief introduction of myself - my name is James McCracken and I am the President/CEO of LeadingAge New Jersey (LANJ).

LANJ is a non-profit trade association that represents communities and mission-based senior care facilities committed to providing high-quality aging services to seniors across this State. To name a few, our members include: Assisted Living Communities, Home and Community-Based Service, Independent Living Senior Housing, Life Plan Communities (CCRCs) and Skilled Nursing Communities. Prior to LANJ, I was appointed as the Long Term Care Ombudsman from 2010 – 2018, I am also a licensed nursing home administrator, and I have first-hand experience directly involved with running nursing home operations.

I can say with confidence that our mission-driven members are committed to serving the highest quality care to their residents and share a common goal – work diligently to improve the quality of care. To that point, it is worth highlighting that New Jersey's nursing homes consistently rank higher than rest of the county in quality ratings, with nearly **67%** achieving at least a 4-star rating from our Federal regulatory agency, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), compared with an average of **50.7%** nationally.

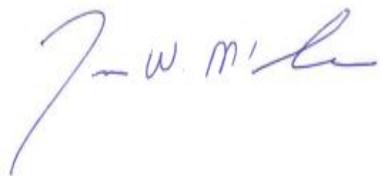
We have all heard some iteration of the phrase – quality over quantity – it's the quality, not the quantity that matters. We at LANJ firmly believe this is the case in the nursing home industry

and respectfully argue there is no correlation between staffing ratios to quality and oppose efforts to mandate ratios. These staffing ratios do not account for the individual care needs and this bill fails to consider safe staffing levels must reflect competencies, skills, experience and knowledge necessary to meet the individual care needs.

As I mentioned earlier, my first-hand experience allowed me to understand the full scope of what must be done and I can say without question that a CNA is one of the most important member of the health care team and plays an integral role in providing exceptional care and service. And as you may or may not be aware, there is a significant shortage of qualified candidates for CNA positions already and nursing homes across this state have difficulty recruiting/retaining staff. The dialogue must be focused on growing this workforce and provide those on the front lines with adequate ongoing training.

LANJ remains strongly committed to working with New Jersey's lawmakers to discuss these important complexities and nuances in this issue and ensure that we take the right step forward in improving the delivery of care for each and every single resident.

Thank you for your consideration of our concerns.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "J. W. McCracken".

James W. McCracken
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