



June 27, 2022

Lori Gutierrez  
Deputy Director, Office of Policy  
625 Forster Street, Room 814  
Health and Welfare Building  
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Via email: RA-DHLTCRegs@pa.gov

Dear Ms. Gutierrez,

I am writing to express concern on the proposed regulations related to IRRC 3343, specifically the 4.1 Nurse staffing ratio in section 211.12(f.1).

Concern # 1: Lack of available nursing staff/flexibility to adapt to needs. The Department is prescribing more stringent staffing minimums than federal standards, specifying RN, LPN and Nurse Aide ratios. We have seen ebbs and flows to the current healthcare workforce shortage. For example, over the past year, we have seen a greater number of LPN hires than we have of Nurse Assistants. The estimated additional staffing needed for the county-owned facilities alone is 539 FTE Nurse Aides and 184 RNs. By prescribing standardized nursing ratios, local hiring and staffing patterns aren't able to be taken into consideration. This could disproportionately impact rural and underserved areas where the services are vital to the community.

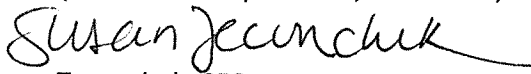
Concern #2: Increased complexity of residents' needs. The current NHPPD direct care resident hours calculation does not consider hours delivered by other skilled, licensed, or specialized providers with appropriate competencies and skills sets. The PPD definition could be expanded to include other disciplines such as allied health professionals, mental health and physical therapists, and staff with certification in areas such as dementia, peer support and activity therapy.

Concern #3: Cost of increase: Any increase in staffing requirements should come with a well thought out plan for funding the labor expense, including indirect costs such as recruitment, training and administrative support associated with an increased employee volume.

Concern #4: Timing of promulgation: Over 9,200 new positions would need to be filled with qualified staff to comply with the regulations as proposed. The current supply of these hours will not meet the demand; please consider providing realistic time frame as well as considerations for good faith staffing efforts in publication of the final regulations.

I applaud the Department for its work to support quality long-term care services. While existing regulations have had few if any changes in 24 years, the delivery of healthcare services has made significant advances in use of technology as well as physical, social, emotional and behavioral health. Any regulatory staffing changes at this time should consider all areas of a resident's determinants of health.

Thank you and the Department, in advance, for your thoughtful consideration of all of the comments.

  
Susan Teconchuk, CEO  
Warren County Rouse Home