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## **Pritzker Administration Urges Action to Protect Seniors in Nursing Homes Following State of the Union Address**

### *HFS Nursing Home Rate Reform Legislation Brings Accountability, Added Resources to Nursing Homes in Line with New Federal Agenda*

The Pritzker administration applauds the federal announcement of new nursing home accountability measures that President Biden highlighted during his State of the Union address on Tuesday.

The Department of Healthcare and Family Services (HFS) has been working with Illinois nursing home associations, organizations representing workers and other interested parties for more than two years on long-needed nursing home rate reform that directly ties new money for long-term care facilities to their performance and the quality of care for residents. HFS pays for the care of about 45,000 Illinoisans in nursing homes across the state and believes their care and safety is of utmost importance.

The federal push for increased accountability underscores how urgently change is needed. As President Biden's proposal highlighted, public funds continue to flow to nursing homes while too many of these facilities are providing a poor quality of care and are understaffed, which can mean an unsafe environment for residents.

The proposal that is currently before the Illinois General Assembly in the form of SB 2995 would infuse more than \$500 million into Illinois Medicaid nursing home rates and create more accountability for the industry by tying payment more accurately to resident needs and actual staff caring for those residents on a daily basis. HFS strongly supports this proposal, which came out of a stakeholder engagement process that took place over a year and a half and resulted in consensus of nearly all parties involved in fall 2021.

"President Biden's announcement of protections for seniors and people with disabilities living in nursing homes shows the urgency of passing the nursing home rate reforms currently under consideration in the Illinois General Assembly," said **Congressman Jesús "Chuy" García (IL-04)**. "We need to support the care workforce and invest in quality, safe, and culturally-appropriate long-term care for our parents and grandparents, and especially for Latino and Black seniors who are more likely to reside in understaffed and substandard nursing homes. It's the least we owe them in their golden years, to allow them to age with dignity."

"Many nursing homes are far too often under-resourced, under-staffed, and mismanaged to provide each elderly and disabled resident the quality of care they need," said **Congressman Danny K. Davis (IL-07)**. "I fully support the Pritzker and Biden initiatives to boost funding, establish transparency, improve safety, control infections, and reduce healthcare disparities in our long-term nursing facilities."

The federal plan seeks to achieve many of the same results for those in the care of nursing homes that HFS and other stakeholders have sought by HFS, including ensuring facilities have adequate staffing levels, tying funding directly to the quality of outcomes for nursing home residents, using Medicaid to fund training and drive wage increases for certified nursing assistants and creating more transparency around facility ownership and reducing resident room crowding.

If the General Assembly passes the nursing home rate reform outlined in SB 2995 that links the quality of care and staffing levels directly to new funding this spring, it will increase funding to Illinois' nursing homes by as much as \$1 million a day or more, giving them time and resources to prepare for these potential new regulations at the federal level.

The federal government tracks nursing home staffing daily and makes this information available for comparison. Of the 100 most poorly-staffed nursing homes in the nation, 47 are in Illinois. Nurse staffing levels have a significant effect on the care residents receive as well as the quality of life they experience and are the single most important measure of nursing home effort and performance. The quality of nursing home care being provided in Illinois is also an equity issue – data shows that Black and Brown Medicaid customers in Illinois are more likely to live in understaffed facilities and crowded rooms.

"Many of us have times where we depend on nursing homes to support our loved ones, but it is sometimes difficult to find a place we can entrust with their care. We do not want Illinois to be known for having the worst-staffed nursing homes but rather the best, and we have an opportunity to invest wisely and be on the front end of improvements if we pass long-needed accountability measures now," **Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services Director Theresa Eagleson** said. "We are heartened by the fact that the Biden administration is announcing some of the same reforms we are proposing in Illinois. It is time to take strong action to ensure that nursing homes invest state resources in the people they commit to care for, not profits."

HFS' recommendations for nursing home rate reform, as well as the history of this undertaking and supporting data and analysis can be found on the [Department's website](#).

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