



March 6, 2024

**Via Email**

U.S. House Committee on Ways and Means  
1139 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington D.C. 20515

**RE: United Steelworkers strongly oppose H.R. 7513, the “Protecting America’s Seniors’ Access to Care Act.”**

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the 50,000 health care members of the United Steel, Paper and Forestry, Rubber, Manufacturing, Energy, Allied Industrial and Service Workers International Union (USW), I write in strong opposition to H.R. 7513, the *Protecting America’s Seniors’ Access to Care Act*. Our 50,000 USW members work in a variety of professions (e.g., registered nurses, certified nursing assistants, licensed practical nurses, technicians, dieticians, etc.) and in many health care settings, including hospitals, community health centers, and of course, long-term care facilities like nursing homes.

This bill, which is incredibly misleading in its title, would not only fail to keep America’s seniors safe, but would actually put them in even more danger. As the contents of this short, two-page bill make clear, the fundamental purpose of H.R. 7513 is to invalidate a recent proposed rule from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). The rule in question—titled “Minimum Staffing Standards for Long-Term Care Facilities and Medicaid Institutional Payment Transparency Reporting”—would establish HHS’s first-ever national minimum health care staffing standard in long-term care facilities, such as nursing homes.

Such a standard is greatly needed. HHS noted the “strong and compelling” evidence for having minimum staffing level all the way back in 2001.<sup>1</sup> More recent scientific research has continued to make this point: in a 2022 report, the National Academy of Science, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM) highlighted that increasing overall staffing has been a consistent and longstanding recommendation for improving the quality of care in nursing homes.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, a 2023 study from Abt Associates noted that recent literature

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<sup>1</sup> Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, Abt Associates Inc. Appropriateness of Minimum Nurse Staffing Ratios in Nursing Homes. Report to Congress: Phase II Final. Volumes I–III. Baltimore, MD: CMS, 2001.

<sup>2</sup> National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. 2022. *The National Imperative to Improve Nursing Home Quality: Honoring Our Commitment to Residents, Families, and Staff*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press.

underscores the relationship between healthcare staffing and quality outcomes, such as reduced pressure ulcers, ER visits, rehospitalizations, and incidents of COVID.<sup>3</sup>

In addition to these national studies, evidence from USW’s membership supports the need for minimum staffing standards. In a recent survey of our health care workers:

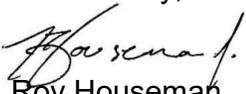
- 82.6% of respondents said that understaffing increased their risk of injury or harm at work;
- 89.2% said that understaffing led to them having to do other people’s jobs and/or having other people being told to do their job; and
- 96.4% said they would feel safer and more secure if there was a national safe staffing standard.

Importantly, nursing home residents themselves also feel safer when there is sufficient staffing. Many similar sentiments were expressed in a survey of USW members who had stayed in nursing homes themselves as residents and/or have family members who have stayed in such facilities. In that survey, 93.5% of respondents said that understaffing in particular negatively affected the quality of care.

Lastly—and hopefully most compellingly—the personal stories of our own health care workers drive home the importance of minimum health care staffing standards. One USW member who works in a nursing home outside of Birmingham, Alabama said “the staffing in my facility has been insufficient for a long time,” and that as a result, she was unable “to give [residents] the proper care they need as a daily part of their life.” This member’s situation is particularly relevant because Alabama is one of the many states that currently has no minimum staffing standard in their long-term care facilities. Another USW member working in northern Minnesota said that due to understaffing, “several jobs that should be completed with two people are often done by one” since there are not enough staff to help. The worker continued that they feel “more rushed to complete their jobs” because they know that there are always more residents who need care. These are just two of the countless, heartbreaking experiences that USW members have shared as to why we need minimum staffing standards in long-term care facilities.

The case is clear: minimum staffing standards protect health care workers, nursing home residents, and their families. As such, I strongly urge you to oppose H.R. 7513—a bill that would lead to less, not more, protection for seniors all across this country.

Sincerely,



Roy Houseman  
Legislative Director

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<sup>3</sup> Abt Associates. 2023. *Nursing Home Staffing Study: Comprehensive Report*.