

March 3, 2025

RE: HSB248

Dear Representative Nordman and Committee Members:

On behalf of Iowa CareGivers, there are many aspects of HSB248 that we support, but we are registered against the bill because of the proposed work requirement to qualify for the Iowa Health and Wellness Plan (IHWP) and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). We are specifically concerned about low-income direct care workers (nurse aides, home care and hospice aides, direct support professionals, and others) who provide at least 80% of the direct hands-on care for your constituents of all ages and abilities. The essential services they provide help keep people in their own homes longer, which saves the system money. When they require a heavier level of care, it is these same hardworking individuals who are there to assist with vital care needs such as bathing, dressing, eating, toileting, oral hygiene, rehabilitation, socialization, and much more. It also requires heavy lifting placing this workforce at high risk for on-the-job injury. Estimated at between 45-60,000 in number, they make up one of the largest segments of Iowa's workforce, but a workforce plagued by shortages, burnout, and high turnover. The turnover of nurse aides working in nursing homes in 2023 was 77% at a cost of over \$120M, not to mention the cost in diminished quality of care. We have been conducting Direct Care Worker Wage and Benefit Surveys since 2001, the most recent of which was through a partnership with Iowa Workforce Development in 2019 with the following findings:

Benefits Received by Direct Care Workers	2010	2019
SNAP	15%	17%
Children are enrolled in HAWK-I	51%	54%
Have no health care coverage from any source.	23%	10%
<p><i>Worth noting is that in 2019 23% reported having health care coverage through the Iowa Health and Wellness Plan, compared to 23% having no health care coverage from any source in 2010. One may safely assume that the reduction in the total % of those uninsured was due, in part, to their being able to enroll in the IHWP.</i></p>		

These state supports are what make it possible for these high demand yet low-income workers to remain in the workforce. Rather than placing more burden on this workforce, we urge you to do more research into the potential for unintended consequences that could negatively impact the already severe shortage of direct care workers and instead identify strategies to increase their wages to a level that will lift them out of poverty so they are no longer forced to rely on public benefits to work.

Thank you for your consideration. Respectfully submitted by Di Findley, Executive Director, Iowa CareGivers  
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