

Coalition of New York State Alzheimer's Association Chapters

Statement of support for A.6571 (Gottfried)/S.3691-A (Hannon)

The Coalition of New York State Alzheimer's Association Chapters strongly supports Assembly bill A.6571 (Gottfried) and Senate bill S. 3691-A (Hannon), which would require hospitals and nursing homes to meet minimum staffing ratios for registered nurses, licensed practical nurses and certified nurse aides. This legislation, known as the Safe Staffing for Quality Care Act, will help ensure that hospitals and nursing homes have the necessary staff to provide good care to their patients. The hospital nurse-to-patient ratios specified in this legislation are based on peer-reviewed academic research and evidence-based recommendations from scholarly entities. The minimum care hours specified for nursing homes are also based on research evidence and the recommendations of the Institute of Medicine's report, *Keeping Patients Safe: Transforming the Work Environment of Nurses* (2004).

Requiring that there are sufficient nurses and nurse aides to provide care in hospitals and nursing homes is a critical step towards ensuring the delivery of high quality care to individuals with Alzheimer's disease. Patients with Alzheimer's disease have care needs that make care delivery challenging and often require staff to allot a significant amount of time to assisting them. Health care professionals in hospitals and nursing homes must be able to monitor persons with dementia, recognize related health problems and provide responsive care. By setting minimum staff-to-patient ratios it is much more likely that nurses providing care to patients with Alzheimer's disease will not be overburdened by their patient load and will be better able to provide appropriate care to their patients. Research supports this proposition. In a study that compared the staffing levels and deficiencies of the 10 largest U.S. for-profit nursing home chains with 5 other ownership groups, researchers found that "nurse staffing levels have been documented to have a positive impact on both the process and the outcomes of nursing home care, such as fewer pressure ulcers, improved functional status, better mortality rates and fewer deficiencies for poor quality."¹ There is also a documented correlation between unsafe staffing and high nurse turnover in hospitals and nursing homes.² As nurse turnover increases the quality of resident care declines, resulting in more frequent use of restraints, urinary catheterization, and psychoactive drugs.³ The nurse to patient staffing ratios required by this legislation will save lives, reduce staff turnover and adverse patient outcomes, and save healthcare dollars.

As New York's population ages, and more people are affected by Alzheimer's and other dementias, the need for quality hospital and nursing home care will increase. On behalf of the 320,000 New Yorkers living with Alzheimer's disease, the Coalition knows that adequate staffing in health care facilities is necessary to ensure the appropriate care of individuals with Alzheimer's disease. The Coalition urges swift passage of this legislation.

¹ Harrington, C., Olney, B., Carrillo, & Kang, T., Nurse staffing and deficiencies in the largest for-profit nursing home chains owned by private equity companies, *Health Services Research*, 47(1), 106-128 (2012).

² Collier, E. & Harrington, C., Staffing Characteristics, turnover rates, and quality of resident care in nursing facilities, *Research in Gerontological Nursing*, 1(3), 157-170 (2008).

³ Id.

Coalition of New York State Alzheimer's Association Chapter, Inc.

Co-Chairs: Catherine James, Central New York Chapter CEO
 Elaine Sproat, Hudson Valley/Rockland/Westchester, NY Chapter CEO

Our Mission

To eliminate Alzheimer's disease through the advancement of research; to provide and enhance care and support for all affected; and to reduce the risk of dementia through the promotion of brain health.

Our Vision

The Coalition of New York State Alzheimer's Association Chapters is a recognized leader to effect systems change through ensuring that every political door is open, every voice is heard, and every legislative initiative contains the Association's voice to benefit people with Alzheimer's disease, their families and caregivers.

Member Chapters

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