



Eldercare Workforce Alliance

www.eldercareworkforce.org

**The Eldercare Workforce Alliance Urges the Senate HELP Committee to Include S. 245, the *Retooling the Health Care Workforce for an Aging America Act of 2009*, in Healthcare Reform Legislation**

May 15, 2009

The Honorable Edward M. Kennedy  
Chairman, Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions  
428 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Michael B. Enzi  
Ranking Member, Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions  
835 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Kennedy and Ranking Member Enzi:

We, the Eldercare Workforce Alliance (EWA)—a coalition of 28 national organizations representing older adults and the healthcare professionals, direct-care workers, and family caregivers who care for them—strongly support S. 245, the *Retooling the Health Care Workforce for an Aging America Act of 2009*, sponsored by Senator Kohl, Senator Lincoln, and Senator Casey—and we urge the Senate HELP Committee to include it in healthcare reform legislation.

Our nation faces an impending healthcare crisis as the number of older patients with more complex health needs increasingly outpaces the number of healthcare providers with the knowledge and skills to adequately care for them. If current workforce trends do not change, we will continue to fail to ensure that every older American is able to receive high-quality care. The Institute of Medicine's (IOM) April 2008 report, *Retooling for an Aging America: Building the Health Care Workforce*, calls for immediate investments in enhancing the geriatric competencies of the entire workforce, increasing the recruitment and retention of geriatric specialists and caregivers, and improving the way that care for older adults is delivered.

S. 245 would address many key recommendations in the IOM report by expanding geriatrics training for medical school and other health professions faculty and for physicians, nurses, social workers, clinical psychologists, and other allied health professionals. It would also expand training for nurses' aides, home health aides and other direct-care workers, as well as family caregivers who provide the majority of daily, hands-on care for millions of older Americans.

Congress does not have the luxury to wait to fix this problem. The fastest growing segment of our population are people over the age of 85, who have the highest per capita utilization of healthcare services and who often have multiple, complex, chronic health conditions. Inadequate training in geriatrics, chronic care management, and long-term care leads to misdiagnoses, medication errors, and poor care coordination—resulting in substandard care and higher costs.

The Eldercare Workforce Alliance urges the Committee to include all of the provisions of S. 245 that fall within its jurisdiction in healthcare reform legislation.

As the HELP Committee considers ways to strengthen our nation's healthcare system through workforce availability and competency, the EWA looks forward to working with you. Thank you for considering our views, and please do not hesitate to contact Steven L. Dawson, President of PHI at 718-402-7766 or SDawson@PHInational.org or Nancy Lundebjerg, Deputy EVP and Chief Operating Officer of the American Geriatrics Society at 212-308-1414 or nlundebjerg@americangeriatrics.org if you have any questions or would like additional information.



Steven L. Dawson, Co-Convener



Nancy E. Lundebjerg, Co-Convener

On behalf of the Eldercare Workforce Alliance members who support S. 245:

- AARP
- Alzheimer's Association
- Alzheimer's Foundation of America
- American Academy of Nursing
- American Association for Geriatric Psychiatry
- American Association of Homes and Services for the Aging
- American Geriatrics Society\*\*
- American Health Care Association and National Center for Assisted Living
- American Medical Directors Association
- American Nurses Association
- American Physical Therapy Association
- American Psychological Association
- American Society of Consultant Pharmacists
- American Society on Aging
- Coalition of Geriatric Nursing Organizations
- Council on Social Work Education
- Direct Care Alliance
- Family Caregiver Alliance
- Gerontological Society of America
- National Alliance for Caregiving
- National Association for Geriatric Education
- National Council on Aging
- National Hispanic Council on Aging
- NCB Capital Impact/THE GREEN HOUSE® Project
- NCCNHR—The National Consumer Voice for Quality Long-Term Care
- New York Academy of Medicine/Social Work Leadership Institute
- PHI—Quality Care through Quality Jobs\*\*
- Visiting Nurse Associations of America

\*\*Alliance Co-Conveners