

# LeadingAge Responds to Sen. Wyden (D-OR) on Staffing Issues and 5-Star

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*Work out the kinks in CMS' still-new PBJ system, urges LeadingAge president and CEO Katie Smith Sloan*

Consumers and their family members deserve the most timely, accurate information about the quality of nursing home care. Senator Ron Wyden (D-OR), ranking member of the Senate Finance Committee, which has jurisdiction over Medicare and Medicaid, has **expressed concern** about a *Kaiser Health News report* regarding the new system of reporting staffing levels in nursing homes, and how the numbers in the latest reports compare with those posted in the past. He questions whether changes to the new payroll-based journal (PBJ) system of staffing reports are needed.

Understaffing and inaccurate reporting are issues that must be addressed. However, the PBJ system just implemented by CMS is not the problem; it is the solution created to correct the previous issue of inaccurate reporting. Give it time. As the PBJ system continues in effect, there likely will be more continuity in staffing levels reported by individual nursing homes.

And let's work out the kinks in the new system. Some of our member nursing homes have told us that their data is not showing up correctly on Nursing Home compare, making it appear that they do not have the nurses and other staff that they in fact do have on duty. We have

**contacted Seema Verma, the head of CMS**, to urge that Nursing Home Compare postings be corrected in a timely manner.

The underlying issue discussed in the *Kaiser Health News* article, lower staffing levels on weekends and at night, is part of the significant workforce challenge our field faces. As difficult as it is for many nursing homes to recruit and retain the overall numbers of staff they need to care for their residents, evening and weekend shifts are especially difficult to fill. We have established the LeadingAge Center for Workforce Solutions to help our nursing home members meet this challenge, and our members have given us valuable input on the strategies they pursue to cover these periods.

We agree with Senator Wyden that input from residents and family members can be a useful indicator of quality of care and quality of life in nursing homes. Many of our members gain this input through resident and family councils and resident satisfaction surveys.

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