

Fran Lusk

From: Colby Martin <Colby_Lynn@outlook.com>
Sent: Saturday, January 29, 2022 6:30 PM
To: Fran Lusk
Subject: HB 2524

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My name is Colby Martin, and I am a Kansas registered nurse. Like so many nurses during this pandemic, I have two jobs. One as a contractor, one as a staff nurse.

I started and have been circulating a petition this weekend with hundreds of signatures from other nurses concerned about House Bill 2524. The link is attached in this email. This bill would cap travel nurse wages at long term care facilities. The problems with this bill are numerous, as I've outlined below.

I've spent much of my career in long term care and I have seen how most of these facilities run on skeleton crew. It is difficult to ensure shifts are filled by licensed nurses, either staff or contract. When I was in a management role, I can't tell you how many shifts I worked myself, days, nights, weekends and holidays, because of the difficulty in finding coverage. If travel nurse wages are capped at these facilities, the pool of available nurses will plummet even further, leaving our elders at risk of neglect and these facilities at risk of closure. Nationwide, approximately 70% of these homes are for-profit. In no other industry could executives and owners seek to further inflate their profit margin by attempting to enact legislation to cap the wages of workers...workers we once called "essential."

Capping these wages in long term care facilities is a slippery slope. Hospitals will be next to jump on board, asking for the same legislation. If Kansas enacts a state wide cap on travel nurse wages, most of us would simply cross the state line and work in a higher paying contract in a surrounding state. The situation in Kansas healthcare facilities is already at crisis level. If all the travel nurses leave the state, it will begin a rapid succession of facility closures due to simply not having available staff to care for patients. In an emergency, you or a family member are looking at having to travel an hour or more to seek lifesaving care when seconds count.

I have to ask why nurses are the only ones being targeted with this bill. Certainly, no one has called for a salary cap on the the multimillion dollar healthcare CEOs. Don't let them tell you this is about keeping an adequate supply of nurses when this bill would do just the opposite. If you request to see the staffing schedule at any rural facility here in Kansas, you will likely find shifts covered solely by travelers. If they are not available, then what? This is a thinly veiled attempt by hospital execs to further inflate their profits and bonuses.

As an example, Genesis Healthcare is one of the largest for profit nursing home chains in the country. An article published in the Washington Post in January of 2021 listed CEO George Hager's base salary at \$900,000 with a \$935,000 annual bonus and a 5.2 million dollar retention bonus. Genesis also lists a profit of 3.9 billion dollars for the fiscal year 2020 according to the Dun and Bradstreet business directory. These companies are not hurting for funds. Do not let them play on your emotions by talking about our vulnerable seniors going without care if this bill isn't passed. They have the funds and simply do not want to pay them to those of us risking our lives on the front line. For a business that is mostly supported with government funds through Medicaid and Medicare, these profits and CEO salaries are astounding.

Do not allow these executives and owners to further push Kansas into crisis as they would by further diminishing the pool of available nurses.

Thank you,
Colby Martin RN/BSN
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