



**To:** Senator Kellie Warren, Chair and Members, Senate Judiciary Committee

**From:** Rachel Monger, Chief Advocacy Officer, LeadingAge Kansas

**Date:** January 19, 2022

**Testimony in Support of HB 2477**

We appreciate the opportunity to speak in support of HB 2477 and its extension of Executive Orders 22-01 and 22-02 until May 15, 2022. The extension of these Executive Orders will allow the regulatory flexibilities that adult care homes need to battle severe staffing shortages and provide safety for the thousands of seniors in their care.

Over the last year nursing homes have struggled with serious staffing shortages. In October we conducted an extensive survey of long term care providers in Kansas. The survey showed that staffing shortages and financial instability in long term care had reached dangerous new levels, confirmed by our recent meetings with 50 nonprofit senior care leaders across the state. These shortages are now made exponentially worse by the rise of the Omicron variant which has sidelined much of our already meager workforce due to increased positive cases and exposures.

Extending Governor Kelly's Executive Orders until at least May 15<sup>th</sup> is critical to allow adult care homes to weather the chaos of the new Omicron variant and to work on longer term solutions to tackle their ongoing staffing challenges. Along with other licensure and training flexibility, extending these Executive Orders allows adult care homes to use temporary aides once again to alleviate care shortages. It was an incredibly effective tool earlier in the pandemic, allowing adult care homes to quickly and efficiently train new and existing staff to fulfill critical roles in resident care. After completing a training course and competency test as dictated by the Kansas Department for Aging and Disability Services, temporary aides can assist residents with basic care, freeing up our certified and licensed professionals to meet the more complex medical needs of residents.

We are thankful for the support we have received from our Legislature, Governor, and state agencies throughout this pandemic. We have all worked together over these last two years to keep Kansas seniors safe, and we hope to continue that work through passage of House Bill 2477.

*LeadingAge Kansas is the state association for not-for-profit and faith-based aging services. We have 160 member organizations across Kansas, which include not-for-profit nursing homes, retirement communities, hospital long-term care units, assisted living, homes plus, senior housing, low-income housing, home health agencies, home and community-based service programs, PACE and Meals on Wheels. Our members serve more than 25,000 older Kansans each day and employ more than 20,000 people across the state.*