



For Immediate Release

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**Contact: Paul Sickel, Political Director
(414) 520-1752, pauls@seiuwi.org**

AB 76 reduces standards for Nurse Aides, risks the safety of the elderly and most vulnerable

MADISON, WI – On Thursday, June 6, The Wisconsin Senate Health and Human Services Committee will hold a hearing on Assembly Bill 76, which would reduce training standards for Certified Nurse Aides (CNAs) to the lowest in the nation. In response to Chair, Patrick Testin’s (R-Stevens Point), decision to schedule a hearing on the Bill, SEIU Healthcare WI President, Ramon Argandona, made the following statement:

CNAs in Wisconsin do some of the hardest work for very low pay to care for our most vulnerable citizens. Currently, there is a crisis in long-term care because workplace demands and low pay make the job less desirable. The obvious solution to the CNA shortage is to increase their living standards. That means increasing their pay and raising Medicaid reimbursement rates. The solution is not to diminish the quality of the workforce by cutting their training requirements to the Federal minimum. Anything less than this increases the risk of unnecessary infections, injuries and illnesses to patients, residents and caregivers alike.

It’s also worth noting that the Joint Finance Committee recently addressed the crisis posed by a shortage of prison guards by increasing their pay, not lowering training or hiring standards. If that works to better serve our inmate population it should also work to serve our elderly and ailing populations. Moreover, most CNAs are women while most prison guards are men. The move to diminish the standards for CNAs is an attempt to solve a workforce shortage without addressing pay. The Legislature should know that this unfair approach to dealing with workforce issues will make the gender pay gap worse. That is the wrong direction for Wisconsin.

This bill should be called the “Unsafe nursing homes, hospitals and long-term care workplaces bill”.

We call on our members and anyone else who values quality care to contact their State Senators to oppose, AB 76. They can be reached at 1-800-362-9472.

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