

**TO:** Chairwoman Susan Concannon and House Committee on Children and Seniors

**SUBJECT:** Testimony in Opposition of HB2524

**FROM:** Jonathan Walden CEO, Walden Medical Staffing LLC

**DATE:** February 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022

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I am writing you today regarding HB2524. I am the owner and founder of Walden Medical Staffing LLC which provides jobs for over 160 people and services approximately 50 facilities all around Kansas. I would like to give you some background about myself and why the opposition of this bill is so important to me and my workforce.

I was raised by a single mother who was a Certified Nurse's aide. I would often go to work with my mom as a child to visit the elderly folks who did not have any family. My mother worked double shifts just to make ends meet on nursing home wages. This meant she would often work 6:00 AM till 10:00 PM at night. I carried the responsibility of helping my family by raising my younger brothers while she worked. I had to grow up fast but learned a lot about the nursing field along the way. I always knew I would be in a caregiver role as an adult.

I started my career in dining services at 16 years of age in a nursing home in my hometown of Hutchinson, KS. I later became a CNA, CMA, LPN and eventually a RN. I climbed the ladder and worked very hard as a single father to obtain my licensures. I later moved to Wichita after accepting a position in a leadership role as a Nurse Manager which led me to becoming a Director of Nursing in a skilled nursing facility. I learned very quick how stressful and daunting this position truly was on my personal life and health. I worked many weekends and holidays due to not having adequate staff. The facility would not allow a staffing agency to assist, so I worked 60-70 hours a week at the expense of my family. Often, I was forced to bring my 5-year-old daughter to work with me and have her sleep on a couch because I did not have childcare. Someone had to take care of the elderly

residents. This caused me to ultimately resign my position after three long, stressful years in my role as a DON. I then tried my hand at real estate, but I realized it was not for me. I am a natural caregiver. It was always my dream to start my own business and I was ready to make a positive change in an understaffed industry.

We started Walden Medical Staffing in May 2021 and we have already impacted so many care homes and their residents along with the lives of our healthcare providers and their families. We partner with countless Administrators, Directors of Nursing, and Schedulers who continually tell us how essential our services are to their facilities. (See attached reviews)

We have assisted many single parents who were not able to make a decent living wage and, in some cases, helped them overcome poverty. Many of our staff have been able to spend more time with their children and less money on daycare services. Some have been able to get off state assistance by making the wage they deserve. I am asking that you listen to the cries of our healthcare providers before it's too late.

My own mother left her career as a nurse due to the working conditions, long hours, and lack of benefits. HB2524 will have a severe, negative effect on our healthcare providers, their families, and most importantly, the residents who count on them to be there every day. Who will respond to the call light if there is no staff? In many cases, the last person an elderly resident will ever see is their caregiver. What if no one was there?

Respectfully,

Jonathan Walden, RN

Owner and Founder

Walden Medical Staffing LLC