

**House Committee on Health and Human Services  
Opponent Testimony for SB 453  
March 8, 2022  
By Camille Russell, Kansas State Long-Term Care Ombudsman  
Office of Kansas Long-Term Care Ombudsman**

Chairwoman Landwehr and Members of the Committee,

I am Camille K. Russell, the Kansas State Long Term Care Ombudsman. I thank you for allowing for this written testimony in opposition to SB453. At the mandate of state and federal law, the long-term care ombudsman program advocates for the rights of individuals in long-term care facilities throughout Kansas. This includes nursing facilities, long-term care units of hospitals, assisted living facilities, home plus facilities, residential health care facilities, and boarding care facilities.

Reducing the quantity or quality of training to any nursing home staff puts both residents and staff at risk. Less training leaves workers less equipped with the skills and knowledge needed to provide quality care. The needs of residents have become more complex over the decades, and more than half of residents are living with dementia.

The intent of healthcare legislation is generally to protect the people working in healthcare, those using services, and the wider public. It is not apparent how SB453 will protect Kansans working in healthcare, Kansans receiving services, or Kansans overall.

Poor job preparation appears to be a serious issue among temporary aid and CNA staff in nursing homes. The Kansas Long Term Care Ombudsman Program continues to receive reports directly from staff who say they feel unprepared for what is expected of them in nursing facilities because of their initial training and the unsupportive environment they find themselves in. They report they do not have the backing of other experienced staff for assistance. They express fear for themselves and fear for residents.

CNAs must know how to report changes in residents' health status, properly turn immobile residents, safely assist those with swallowing difficulties to eat, minimize distress and related behaviors among those with dementia, and so much more. It is an essential and valuable job, and it is critical it is preserved as such. When staff are not trained to fulfill these responsibilities with confidence and expertise, the quality of care and resident emotional well-being is compromised.

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Reports from residents and families to long-term care ombudsmen speak to the inadequate care provided to residents during the pandemic.

While inadequate staffing levels are a key factor, the concerns around staff competency due to insufficient training and oversight are of equal alarm. Training matters to know how to care for people. It takes time and attention. It is critical. Workers with less training are more likely to be injured and cause injury to residents.

Insufficient staffing standards is a long-known issue advocates have voiced for decades. The pandemic only served to expose and increase this problem in long-term care.

While the entire country is poised to address this issue, please do not allow Kansas to be a state that moves backward.

I urge you to review a new report from The Consumer Voice, March 2022 (<https://theconsumervoicework.org/uploads/files/issues/suffering-in-lockdown.pdf>). This report also references another report from March 2021 that found on average an excess of 100% turnover in staff in one year in facilities across the country. Inadequate training, high-stress conditions, and insufficient pay make nursing home jobs unattractive and subject to high turnover rates. SB453 is not a solution to high turnover...it is not a staffing solution.

Reducing training requirements will only increase the problems that already exist. This is a human service business. A significant amount of taxpayer dollars funds the work. It is time to ask industry ownership to come up with real solutions. Real solutions would include being transparent and accountable with the funding they receive; and doing right by the residents and the workforce they are receiving funding to support. Cutting corners on the staff's training and support is not the answer; it would lead to additional harm to the residents and those individuals going to work each day to care for them.

The Kansas Long Term Care Ombudsman Program must oppose this legislation and any legislation that would weaken staffing standards ongoing.

Respectfully Submitted,

Camille Russell

Kansas State Long-Term Care Ombudsman