



Testimony of Jena Jones on Behalf of  
the Maine Council on Aging  
to the Joint Standing Committee on Health and  
Human Services

**In Support of LD 451 – An Act To Ensure  
Transparent and Accountable Temporary Nurse  
Agencies**

Delivered in Person on March 16, 2023

Greetings Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services:

My name is Jena Jones and I'm the Policy and Advocacy Director of the Maine Council on Aging (MCOA). The MCOA is a broad, multidisciplinary network of over 130 organizations, businesses, municipalities, and older community members working to ensure we can all live healthy, engaged and secure lives with choices and opportunities as we age at home and in community settings. I am testifying in favor of LD 451.

Adequate nursing staffing is essential to the provision of quality care for individuals in hospitals and nursing homes. Critically important, nursing homes have staffing ratios they must maintain and dipping under those ratios is an immediate and automatic penalty. Ideally, hospitals and nursing homes employ nurses and certified nursing assistants (CNAs) who provide consistent, quality care. However, due to the ongoing nursing and CNA shortage, hospitals and nursing homes must sometimes call upon Temporary Nursing Agencies to meet essential staffing needs.

During the years spanning the pandemic, Temporary Nurse Agency costs have risen by over 460% in Maine for hospitals. Over the 2017-2021 timeframe, these costs have nearly doubled for Nursing Homes. Depending on the number of nurses and CNAs a hospital or nursing facility needs, this cost increase can seriously impact the long term viability of these institutions and the quality of care they provide.

LD 451 is intended to introduce greater transparency and accountability for Temporary Nurse Agencies, help stabilize costs and increase care quality.

The MCOA advocates for all of us who need care in nursing homes and hospitals and recognizes the critical importance of an adequate number of nurses and CNAs with appropriate qualifications to the delivery of quality care.

As recently reported in the Portland Press Herald (3/5/23: 'With no place to go, some patients in Maine spend months in hospitals'), we are now facing a significant shortage of residential care beds in Maine because of staffing shortages (in Dec. 2022, 84% of long term care facilities reported staff shortages) which has meant that people must stay in the hospital for far too long, sometimes even months after the time they are ready for discharge. The high cost of Temporary

Nursing Agency staffing drives facilities to close beds, leaving people stuck in hospitals even longer.

This staffing problem (and consequent lack of adequate quality care for people in need of residential care) is bigger than LD 451 alone will solve. We are actively supporting a variety of other measures to improve the overall shortage of essential care workers, but LD 451 is one strategy that can help to stabilize costs of Temporary Nursing Agencies, and help to ensure the situation does not decline further.

We urge you to vote in favor of LD 451.

I am happy to answer any questions.

Thank you.  
Jena Jones