

Good afternoon. I am Pam Smith, Director of Community Relationships and Resident Experience at Woodlands Senior Living. I am thrilled to be here today to discuss my cherished field, senior care.

My journey in senior care began after high school, when I worked as a C.N.A. in nursing homes. There I learned the rules, skills, and tricks of the trade from some of the best caregivers ever. In 1993, I accepted a position with Woodlands Senior Living as an overnight caregiver. Over the next several years, I held various positions, eventually becoming a licensed Residential Care Administrator in 2000 and, as such, opened Woodlands' first memory care community. I applied my previous training and experience to ensure high-quality care and services provided with efficiency and kindness. In 2023, my mother was diagnosed with Alzheimer's and admitted to a Woodlands memory care program, adding another chapter of experience and perspective to my career.

I share my history to establish the expertise behind my testimony. My primary concern with the provisionally adopted rules is the increase in staffing levels. Here's my pitch – **additional employees on duty do not equate to higher quality care.** Others have already made the very good case that there aren't enough job seekers to fill current positions, and the cost of additional personnel will be devastating. Although I agree, the point I want to make is **additional employees on duty do not equate to higher quality care.** As a former C.N.A. who worked as part of a well-oiled team, I tell you that the quality of caregivers improves the quality of care. The sheer volume of caregivers does not. Here's my best analogy – if there's a losing basketball team lacking well-coached players, with a weak playbook, and nonexistent teamwork – is adding a 6th person on the court the solution? No. Quality senior care is provided with quality caregivers, quality supervision, and quality leadership. Quality outcomes are what our regulators should be focusing

on. That is the solution. One more time - **additional employees on duty do not equate to higher quality care.**

Lastly, from my newer perspective as a family member regularly visiting a memory care community, I want the very best for my mother. I know immediately when I walk into the building if the A-team is on duty. The A-team functions expertly, effortlessly, and confidently. The goal for providing quality assisted living services in Maine should be an A-team in every facility, every shift. Quality personnel is the answer, and this is the last time I'll say **additional employees on duty do not equate to higher quality care.**

My request is that you ask me and other experts in this room how to attain higher quality care and better outcomes. We'll share with you how to develop A-teams, because we all want the A-teams caring for our mothers.

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