



SB 1549 Testimony
Relating to Health Care Temporary Staffing Agencies
Senate Labor and Business Committee
February 8, 2022

Chair Taylor, Vice Chair Knopp and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to comment on SB 1549 relating to health care temporary staffing agencies. I am Ruth Gulyas, CEO of LeadingAge Oregon – the statewide association of not-for-profit and other mission-directed organizations consisting of residential care and assisted living facilities, nursing homes, in-home care agencies, continuing care retirement facilities known as CCRCs and federally subsidized housing for low-income seniors.

LeadingAge Oregon fully supports SB 1549 that would establish regulatory oversight through licensure for currently unregulated temporary staffing agencies and establish a maximum rate a staffing agency may charge for services.

While long term care (LTC) providers have used staffing agencies on a temporary basis to supplement staffing prior to the pandemic, they have had to use them much more during the pandemic. This is especially true as providers are in the midst of another crisis - a workforce shortage of a magnitude not seen before. Many have stopped admitting new residents, closed portions of their facility and some are being forced to close as a result. Caregivers have experienced great stress juggling their work with their own personal caregiving responsibilities. They are burnt out. As more than one member has said, "it's brutal."

During all this, staffing agencies have drastically raised rates, refused to work with providers who don't offer a bonus and are offering wages higher than caregivers can get with their current employer exacerbating vacancy issues and increasing the need to use agencies. Providers are already stretched financially due to the pandemic and cannot continue to absorb the increasing costs being levied by staffing agencies. All of this has also created a morale issue for those dedicated staff who have remained with the provider, putting in extra time, carrying a heavier load, experiencing more stress only to have outside staff show up who are making much more than them. And residents don't get care from staff that know them the best.

Oregon is not alone. This issue has impacted health and long term care organization across the country and has received congressional attention. On January 25, our national organization, LeadingAge and several LTC organizations sent [a joint letter](#) to the White House COVID-19 Response Team coordinator requesting the federal government to look into exorbitant nurse staffing agency rates. More than 200 Members of Congress sent a similar [letter](#) to the White House requesting federal agencies investigate staffing firms conduct and pricing.

On February 1, the Senate Commerce Subcommittee on Consumer Protection,

Product Safety, and Data Security convened a Congressional hearing titled, "Stopping COVID-19 Fraud and Price Gouging". On February 2, the House Energy and Commerce Consumer Protection and Commerce Subcommittee convened a congressional hearing titled "Pandemic Profiteers: Legislation to Stop Corporate Price Gouging." My understanding is both were to address proposals to strengthen the Federal Trade Commission's enforcement against unfair and deceptive practices and go after price gougers.

We urge the committee to support passage of SB 1549 which will put in place critical safeguards for regulatory oversight of staffing agencies, curb the prices they are charging, and help to alleviate the stress by our long term care providers. Thank you again for the opportunity to comment.