Quality of Care in Nursing Homes: Staffing Ratios Affect Care

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Staffing is a vital component for the quality of care provided to the over 1.8 million disabled and elderly residents in the over 17,000 nursing homes in the United States. Higher levels of staffing in nursing homes are correlated with fewer hospital admissions. The *Preservation of Access to Care for Medicare Beneficiaries and Pension Relief Act of 2010* included provisions that would significantly cut Medicare payments for skilled nursing facility care by almost $7 billion the first year. Significant cutting of Medicare payments for skilled nursing facility care would total $44 billion nationally over ten years and jeopardize as many as 50,000 jobs nationwide. Cutting staff would have a direct, immediate, negative impact on patients.

In a system already stretched to capacity, the last thing anybody wants is the implosion of our nursing home system due to inability to staff to the levels discussed within. While H.R. 3962 has become law, Representative Kathy Castor from Florida has proposed the *Nursing Home Patient and Medicaid Assistance Act of 2010/HR 5457*, which addresses the issue of funding such staffing ratios. The bill calls for the additional funding of $6 billion over the next four years for qualifying nursing facilities.

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1 Charles Grassley. Letter to The Honorable Mark McClellan. Web. 7 Jul. 2004
2 Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Service. Web. 3 Jan. 2010