



**Re: Interim Charge 4**

House Human Services Committee,

The Texas Nurses Association (TNA), on behalf of the 300,000 registered nurses in Texas, would like to thank this committee for focusing on how the state can improve workforce retention and quality of care in long term care programs. Long Term Care (LTC) facilities have had issues with staff vacancy and turnover for many years, but the pandemic has dramatically worsened those problems.

In 2019, the Texas Center for Nursing Workforce Studies developed the LTC Nurse Staffing Study (*see attached*). The study found that Registered Nurses (RNs) had a vacancy rate of 12.7% in LTC facilities, which was the highest position-specific vacancy rate. Further, the study found that median turnover rates among direct resident care RNs in LTC facilities was an astounding 48.1%. High vacancy and turnover rates directly impact the quality of care and can lead to negative outcomes for the state's most vulnerable population.

The study also focused on qualitative issues. For example, when surveyed, more than half of the responding LTC facilities reported increased workloads, increased voluntary overtime, low staffing morale, and using administrative staff to cover nursing duties. These issues have a compounding effect—inadequate staffing leads to increased turnover and increased turnover leads to inadequate staffing.

Finally, the study looked at potential solutions. Just over half of respondents ranked a pay increase as being most impactful on retention. While directly increasing pay is one way to create incentives, another option is for the state to create a student loan repayment program for nurses practicing in LTC. In fact, last session, Representative Stephanie Klick and Senator Beverly Powell filed HB 3111 and SB 2300 to create such a program. Both bills were reported favorably by their respective committees, but the legislative session ended before either bill could be voted on in their chamber.

On behalf of the many nurses who are working in long term care facilities during these most trying times, TNA is requesting that the legislature reexamine the need for a loan repayment program. Such a program would attract nurses, particularly newly graduated nurses, who often have a preference for jobs in acute care hospital settings, to careers in LTC. Nurse recruitment, retention, and turnover would improve resulting in better quality of care for vulnerable elders. Thank you for your consideration of this matter, and please contact us directly if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tammy Eades". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Tammy Eades, DNP, MSN, RN  
President, Texas Nurses Association