



To: House Subcommittee on Contract Nursing

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KHA has recognized the challenges related to workforce require us to consider new and innovative ways to help solve problems of both attracting and retaining health care talent in the state.

That's why we have worked to establish a specific committee of workforce professionals working in hospital and healthcare settings from around the state. The committee has already directed some great initiatives that we have launched in the last two years.

- Support mentorship/preceptors in health care
  - KHA has launched a Health Care Preceptor Academy to be held at least 4 times per year across the state.
    - The goal is to better prepare and equip clinicians to serve as preceptors/mentors to increase the capture of students hired following graduation during clinical rotations and to improve the retention of existing staff or new hires.
- Improving recruitment and retention via health care apprenticeships
  - 10 hospitals and several long-term care facilities, clinics, and other health care organizations have already launched apprenticeships to help with career advancement, retaining employees, and recruiting new team members.
- Building awareness of health careers to encourage students to pursue them
  - Virtual Health Care Career Day
    - KHA launched this event with the Kansas State Department of Education, and Kansas Board of Regents to promote awareness of the wide variety of health care careers to students of all ages across Kansas.
      - Results:
        - 2000+ people attended in 2023 representing over 150 schools, adult learners, homeschool students, etc.

- 3000+ people attended in 2024 representing over 160 schools, adult learners, homeschool students, etc.
- HappyInHealthCare.Org
  - KHA created and launched a new one-stop shop website/tool called HappyInHealthCare.Org to contain information about dozens of health care careers, the colleges in Kansas that offer the training to pursue that profession, and comprehensive financial aid information for students and adults to learn how they can obtain an education and minimize their personal out-of-pocket expenses.

### **Things the Legislature Could Consider:**

While, KHA remains committed to helping our members solve the challenges related to workforce, we also realize that there are several opportunities that Kansas could consider as we discuss these topics with our colleagues from across the country. The below are a few items that could be considered in the future:

- Continue and expand investments in Apprenticeships
  - The 2023 legislature passed HB 2292, which included funding for health care apprenticeships.
  - Why:
    - Sustaining and enhancing existing funding will help to expand the support services offered by intermediary organizations which will vastly increase the number of employers creating and offering apprenticeships.
- Implement health care staffing agency transparency and accountability requirements (similar to the Senate’s language in the budget)
  - Why:
    - Promotes a more equal playing field and will improve competition and re-balance rates offered by agencies to prevent market exploitation.
- Reform the Kansas Nursing Initiative Grant program by:
  - Removing the 1:1 match requirement
  - Expand the usability of how grant funds can support nursing programs, staff, and students
  - Allow a portion of the funds to be allocated to multi-year commitments
  - Why:

- This increase in flexibility will better support nursing programs across Kansas which ensures programs remain open and can potentially expand, which means more students will graduate annually.
- Enhance investments in the Kansas Nursing Initiative Grant program to support:
  - Tutoring and NCLEX Prep for more students to successfully pass this professional exam and enter the workforce more quickly.
  - Simulation lab and classroom development and expansion to support programs that may be able to increase their number of nursing students per year.
  - Training, supplies, updating equipment to meet industry standards, and faculty recruitment and retention.
  - Why:
    - The need for this increase is due to more institutions being involved, rising expenses and equipment costs, and the increased cost of educating students and preparing them for the NCLEX exam.
- Enhanced funding should be provided to support the recruitment and retention of nursing instructors.
  - Possibly via bonuses, salary increases, or benefits of a tax credit/exemption if they are a health care educator.
  - Why:
    - Too many instructors are leaving the state and/or education field to accept more lucrative opportunities. Some programs are having to reduce the number of students they admit due to not having enough instructors. A program that offers any kind of incentive for those to become a health care educator in Kansas can help improve the faculty shortages and enable programs to graduate more Kansas students.
- The Kansas Nursing Service Scholarship program should be expanded to aid people who want to get their nursing degree through their master's degree in nursing.
  - At a minimum it should include LPN to RN, RN to BSN, and BSN to Master of Science in Nursing students.
  - Expanding this program will require additional funding
  - Why:
    - Expanding this program to include those obtaining their master's degree will help expand the number of advanced practice providers in

Kansas and increase the number of nursing educators due to a master's degree being required to teach nursing education.

- Create an Allied Health professions equivalent scholarship program like the Kansas Nursing Service Scholarship Program
  - Incentivize students to pursue disciplines like physical therapy, occupational therapy, radiology technology, respiratory therapy, laboratory, etc. by making it easier to pay for college and incentivize living and working in Kansas following graduation.
  - Also include paying for licensure examinations
  - Why:
    - While there have been improvements in the nursing workforce (albeit challenges still persist), Allied Health professions have continued to experience high vacancy and turnover. This will promote more allied health (non-nursing) graduates to stay and work in Kansas in their fields of study.
  
- Increase funding of new Graduate Medical Education (GME) residency program slots in Kansas
  - Why:
    - This encourages more physicians working in Kansas following their medical education and training.
  
- Expand/Increase the Rural Hospital Innovation Grant program
  - New funding to support acquiring and implementing new technological tools and infrastructure including but not limited to telemedicine delivery methods, artificial intelligence, virtual care, nurse residency program, other transition to practice programs, and more.
  - Why:
    - Many health care organizations may lack the resources to initiate new programs that can help reduce burnout, improve care delivery, and other benefits. This kind of support can help bridge those gaps.

- Reauthorize and expand the Rural Opportunity Zone Program
  - Add new incentives including housing and/or childcare support
  - Modify those who are eligible as to not be overly restrictive on the usability of the program.
  - Why:
    - While health care professionals are needed everywhere, rural Kansas faces additional challenges in recruiting employees/families. Enhancing the ROZ program can help add another tool in the toolbox of rural employers (not just in health care).

**Next Steps for consideration:**

This committee could recommend that the Senate proviso language be a benchmark point to determine the trajectory that staffing agencies and related expenses is truly having on the industry, so that future information can be informed by these reporting requirements. If the costs are on the decline and therefore the costs to taxpayers and patients are going down, then this allows an option to go back to how the market operates today. We would also suggest more committee discussion or a possible interim committee to further study assembling a comprehensive healthcare workforce bill, as other states have done, would be a meaningful next step in the process.