Care Economy Workforce
Messages and Guidance for Legislative Visits

Purpose: Leaders need to develop solutions to attract, retain and develop the qualified workforce required to meet the needs of older adults. Providers can redefine themselves and the sector by being vocal advocates to ensure government delivers needed resources for older adults. Now is also the time to highlight our dedicated, compassionate care professionals, who have overwhelming public support and who support us and our families even under difficult circumstances.

LeadingAge Virginia is committed to providing its members with care economy workforce messaging that can be used for legislative visits, media interviews, open houses, social media, community events, etc.

Background: The Long-Term Services and Supports workforce faces significant challenges in Virginia and must be addressed so high-quality services and supports can be provided to a rapidly growing older population. Supporting the workforce is central to improving the perception of aging services providers and making Virginia a destination state for retirees and health care professionals.

Coordination: Members are strongly encouraged to contact LeadingAge Virginia for assistance coordinating messaging on this topic and align media relations and social media efforts.

Who’s My Legislator? The Who’s My Legislator? service is an online tool that can be used to determine which state and federal legislators represent your community.

How To Enhance Your Messaging:

- Telling the story of staff-resident bonds is powerful.
- Humanize stories whenever possible and include photos of current or tenured caregivers
- Use “professional caregivers” vs. “providers/care workers”
- Enlist messengers and ambassadors the public finds persuasive, especially older adults, families, and professional caregivers.
- Create business cards (include website and contact information) that residents and caregivers can provide to people in the greater community who demonstrate the level of service your residents and families expect.
Key Messages:

- Now is the time to build a better system for older Americans. Services and supports for older adults must be a priority.
- Older adults have a right to receive a basic level of housing, healthcare, and essential support.
- A strong and stable long-term care workforce will change the lives of people who can finally get the housing, care, and other support they need.
- The compassionate professionals working in aging services are unsung heroes, experts in providing the essential support we need as we grow older.
- Aging services professionals are compassionate and dedicated, often becoming like family for those in their care. For them, providing the support we need as we grow older is a labor of love.
- Professional caregivers are at the heart of aging services. Their invaluable work keeps older Virginians healthy, safe, and living life to the fullest – even under difficult circumstances.
- It is about the people long-term health care workers serve, not the providers.
- An unstable workforce results in higher provider costs, lower quality of service and poor working conditions.
- We envision a direct care workforce that is a professionalized workforce; one that is highly trained and experienced to provide outstanding support and care to older Virginians.
- The aging services field has the jobs of the future as Americans live longer.
- Direct care workers are the heart of aging services, and the COVID-19 pandemic has underscored the need to invest in this essential workforce.

Resources:

- [Opening Doors To Aging Services](#)
- [Dos and Don’ts](#)
- [Feeling Valued Because They Are Valued](#)
- LeadingAge Recruitment [Tools](#)
- Careers That Love You Back [video](#)

Supporting Statistics and Information:

**Virginia**

1. Workforce challenges in Virginia’s nursing homes (Joint [Commission](#) on Health Care)
2. Virginia’s older adult population is [projected to increase](#) by nearly 51% in the next 20 years (an additional 600,000 seniors) – from 1.3 million in 2017 to 1.9 million in 2040.
3. Virginia’s Continuing Care Retirement Community will serve more than 24,000 residents and employ more than 22,000 staff in 2040. Their combined economic impact is estimated at $2.6 billion.

4. LeadingAge Virginia’s 133 not-for-profit member organizations served a total of 18,500 seniors: 13,000 in CCRCs, 3,600 in other types of residential settings, and 1,300 in day programs. They employed an estimated 18,000 mission-oriented staff across all skill levels in 108 client serving locations (out of a total of 121).

5. Licensed through the Virginia State Corporation Commission, there are 53 CCRCs in Virginia; 42 are LeadingAge Virginia members.

6. A significant proportion of the Virginia population has migrated to the state recently. Over the 2000-2010 decade, retirement migration to the state was significant.

7. There are between 100,000 and 110,000 nurses in Virginia, but experts projected a shortfall of about 10% to 20% this decade.

8. Even before the pandemic, Virginia was projecting shortages of doctors, nurses and health care professionals. (VA Mercury)

9. People 65 and over make up 16% of Virginia’s population.

10. With a high school education and training, careers can be found as Certified Nurse Assistants, Licensed Practical Nurses, Food Prep and Serving Workers

11. Job diversity with a college degree: Dieticians, health educators, registered nurses, counselors and social workers, physical and occupational therapists, technology experts, marketing/communications, administration

**National**

1. During the COVID-19 pandemic, long-term care lost 342,000 jobs from February to December 2020, due to decreased use and workers leaving their jobs.

2. Recent LeadingAge findings show that, due to ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, direct care health workers experience external and work-related challenges, including increased stress and workload demands.

3. LeadingAge reports that the aging population is creating a growing need for aging services. According to the American Association of Retired Persons, over 7.9 million people over 65 needed long-term services and support in 2018 alone. While the direct care workforce grew to 4.6 million from 2009 to 2019, long-term care lost 342,000 jobs, during the COVID-19 pandemic, due to decreased use and workers leaving their jobs, according to PHI International.

4. The U.S. is experiencing a significant shortage of, and a growing demand for, qualified workers who are capable of managing, supervising, and providing high-quality services and support for older adults. Among those currently reaching retirement age, 52% will require LTSS at some point. The nation will need an additional 2.5 million LTSS professional caregivers by 2030.

5. The long-term care sector will need to fill 6.2 million direct care job openings between 2019 and 2029 as workers leave the field for a new occupation or leave the labor force altogether due to retirement, disability, or another reason. Combining these departures and new jobs, there will be a projected 7.4 million total direct care job openings in the decade ahead.
6. A July 2021 survey by the American Health Care Association found that 94% of all nursing homes are facing staff shortages, with 73% saying their organization’s overall workforce situation has gotten worse when compared to 2020.

7. It’s where the jobs are: every day, 10,000 people turn 65, seven out of 10 will need some kind of help, by 2050, the U.S. will have only ½ of people we need for these jobs.