

Brian Doherty – President and CEO
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Dear Members,

As I shared in my last newsletter [article](#), our top strategic goal is to develop a short-term and long-term Mass-ALA workforce recruitment and retention strategy. In this article, I will update you on what a state workforce report means for assisted living, and share the results of members' input on workforce programs and support they are seeking. A report from a state health care research institution this year provided insights and recommendations related to the current caregiving workforce challenges. Here are the key takeaways from that report that could be useful to assisted living executives.

The MA Health Policy Commission (HPC) report, [Health Care Workforce Trends and Challenges in the Era of COVID-19: Current Outlook and Policy Considerations for Massachusetts](#) analyzed trends in the health care workforce “to provide new quantitative and qualitative insights into the current state of the health care workforce in Massachusetts and to offer policy recommendations to begin to address these challenges.” The in-depth report was accompanied by a shorter [executive summary](#).

Assisted living providers are well aware of the scope and severity of the current unprecedented workforce challenges, a view which this report recognized and provided data to support. I will focus here on sharing the recommendations in the report related to the assisted living workforce, understanding that assisted living executives are most interested in potential strategies and solutions.

The report recognized the workforce recruitment and retention challenges in the direct care workforce, and issued the following recommendations for providers:

- Support workers in transitioning from training to employment and offer opportunities for professional development and advancement.
- Clear and accessible career ladders for direct care workers will help the entire health care workforce better resemble the patients they serve.

The report also recognized challenges of recruitment and retention of nurses, and issued the following recommendations for providers:

- Improved mentoring and coaching for new nurses.
- Enhanced administrative support and effective use of direct care roles and other paraprofessionals.
- Improved compensation and schedule flexibility.
- Increased support around incidents of workplace violence.
- Reduce avoidable hospitalizations.

In addition to the recommendations for specific segments of the workforce, the HPC report had these broader recommendations for providers:

- Work with the Commonwealth to offer pre-apprenticeship learning opportunities to employees, to facilitate career pathways within their organizations.

- Use innovative approaches to staffing to help alleviate shortages and transform care delivery while reducing reliance on contract workers, such as internal travel programs, flexibility in shift lengths, or innovative use of roles such as LPNs and advanced-practice providers.
- Invest in support staff to alleviate nurses and direct care workers of administrative responsibilities and support appropriate allocation of tasks and use of these roles, and streamline processes to reduce administrative complexity and staffing resources devoted to tasks that do not improve patient care.
- Invest in supporting and retaining health care workers from historically marginalized backgrounds, including identifying and addressing bias and barriers faced by clinicians and other health care workers of color.
- Collaborate across delivery organizations and sectors to reduce avoidable hospitalizations, which are among the highest in the nation.
- Consider subsidizing or offering childcare on-site.

The HPC anticipates future reports that will focus on workforce analysis and recommendations in other professions. We will continue to track this research to bring the data and insights to assisted living.

Members' Input on Workforce Programs

In a recent Mass-ALA member survey, we asked what workforce programs assisted living professionals are interested in. We listed potential programs, and asked which would be most helpful if Mass-ALA was able to provide them. The results from this question are listed below in order of those most favored to those least favored.

- Tuition reimbursement, loan forgiveness, scholarships (35 responses)
- Specialized trainings or certifications for specific assisted living roles (ex. nurses, dining staff) (31 responses)
- Discounts on trainings, degrees and/or certifications (28 responses)
- Specialized trainings or certifications for executive directors (20 responses)
- Identified career pathways in assisted living (19 responses)
- Multilingual training opportunities for ESL staff (17 responses)
- The following all received 14 responses:
 - Mentorship Opportunities
 - Internship and apprenticeship programs
 - Collegiate programs designed for AL professionals
- Panels, roundtables, discussions focused on leadership development (13 responses)
- I don't think any of these would be helpful (3 responses)

We appreciate members sharing their voice with us on these and other issues. Mass-ALA will continue to explore how to help alleviate the current workforce challenges in the short term and how to build an assisted living workforce that best meets the needs of older adults.

Brian Doherty,

President and CEO, Mass-ALA