



Workforce Weekly Recap
Friday, February 13, 2026

Nursing Home Staffing Standards Bill Introduced in Senate. Sen. Ron Wyden (D-OR) introduced the [Nurses Belong in Nursing Homes Act](#) on February 12 that would require nursing homes to provide 3.48 hours per resident, per day (HPRD) of total nurse staffing and 24 hours per day, 7 days per week of registered nurse (RN) staffing. The bill eliminates the statutory waiver of nurse staffing and provides for future increases to staffing requirements. The bill would require a study of the sufficiency of staffing within two years of enactment and not less than every four years thereafter, with requirements for regulations to be implemented and updated within one year after each study reported to the Secretary. LeadingAge does not support the bill. LeadingAge remains concerned about staffing standards that do not consider the very real challenges of workforce shortages and inadequate reimbursement faced by many of our members and will be addressing these issues with members of Congress. Read our statement on the bill [here](#).

CMS Re-releases Nurse Incentive NOFO. The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) announced on February 9 that they have re-opened the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) for Financial Incentive Administrators for the Nursing Home Staffing Campaign. Financial Incentive Administrators (FIAs) are public, private, and state institutions of higher education and non-profit organizations such as associations for nurses, nursing schools, and nursing students. Nursing homes and nursing home associations are ineligible to apply for this NOFO. This NOFO is part of CMS's Nursing Home Staffing Campaign and will fund FIAs to recruit registered nurses (RNs), licensed practical nurses (LPNs), and licensed vocational nurses (LVNs) to work in nursing homes and state survey agencies. [Read the NOFO here](#). The NOFO closes March 27, 2026. CMS intends to select FIAs in summer 2026. The FIAs will have time to set up infrastructure before beginning to recruit and place nurses and disburse funds. More information is forthcoming on eligibility criteria and procedures for nursing homes to be matched with incentivized nurses.

NURSE Visa Act Introduced to Address Severe Nursing Workforce Shortages. Rep. Don Beyer (D-VA) introduced the National Urgent Recruitment for Skilled Employees (NURSE) Visa Act, [legislation](#) aimed at easing nationwide nursing shortages by expanding access to work visas for internationally trained nurses. Beyer noted that ongoing staffing challenges across the health care system driven by retirements, lingering effects of the pandemic, and sustained demand for nursing professionals contribute to shortages that are fueling burnout and threatening access to timely, high-quality care. His bill would amend the Immigration and Nationality Act to make available 20,000 nonimmigrant visas per fiscal year for nurses employed in areas designated by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) as experiencing a nursing workforce shortage. Eligibility would be tied not only to the shortage designation but also to facility-level requirements, including having a provider-to-patient staffing ratio policy in place. Rep. Beyer previously introduced the legislation in 2024. For LeadingAge members, the Nurse Visa Act is notable as a legislative proposal focused on expanding legal immigration pathways specifically to address nursing shortages. LeadingAge supports the bill and will work with Rep. Beyer to seek bipartisan backing for this legislation.

Lorna Breen Act Reauthorized Through FY 2026 Appropriations. Congress reauthorized the [Dr. Lorna Breen Health Care Provider Protection Act](#) after including the measure in the [appropriations legislation](#) that was signed into law on February 3. First enacted in 2022, the Lorna Breen Act funds grants administered by the Health Resources and Services Administration to help health care employers address burnout, suicide risk, and behavioral health challenges through training, prevention, and system-level interventions. Through its

partnership with the [Healthcare Workforce Coalition](#), LeadingAge supported the bill and welcomes its reauthorization, which preserves an important federal tool to support the mental health of caregivers at a time of ongoing workforce strain.

Department of Education Publishes Proposed Rule on “Professional Degrees.” On January 30, as [expected](#), the Department of Education published a proposed [rule](#) intended to implement several higher-education provisions from HR 1, including new parameters for federal student loan programs. Of particular interest to LeadingAge members is the proposal to revise the definition of “professional degree,” which now plays a significant role in determining federal loan limits for advanced degree programs. HR 1 established two tiers of loan caps: students enrolled in graduate programs may borrow up to \$20,500 annually with a \$100,000 lifetime limit, while students in programs classified as awarding a “professional degree” may access up to \$50,000 annually and \$200,000 total. Because this rule defines what constitutes a “professional degree,” it will directly affect which students qualify for the higher borrowing limits. LeadingAge is concerned that the proposed definition excludes several critical fields that underpin the aging-services workforce, including nursing, physical and occupational therapy, physicians’ assistants, and social work. Members have also noted that rural communities are likely to feel the impact most acutely, as advanced practice clinicians often serve in roles typically filled by physicians in those settings. In addition, limiting borrowing capacity for graduate-level degrees could impact the number of nurse educators, having a downstream effect on training programs and the broader pipeline. The proposed rule is open for public comment for 30 days, with comments due by March 2. LeadingAge will submit comments on behalf of the association, and we encourage state partners and members to continue to share any perspectives, examples, or concerns they would like us to incorporate into our response.