

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

April 10, 2025

The Honorable Robert F. Kennedy, Jr.
Secretary
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Ave, SW
Washington, DC 20201

The Honorable Lori Chavez-DeRemer
Secretary
U.S. Department of Labor
200 Constitution Ave, NW
Washington, DC 20210

Dear Secretaries Kennedy and Chavez-DeRemer,

We are deeply concerned that the reckless and extreme immigration policies of the Trump Administration could cause long-term damage to our health care system, especially access to long-term services and supports for older adults and people with disabilities, which are provided by direct care workers. Immigrant workers have long been essential to this workforce, making up nearly 30 percent of all direct care workers in the U.S., and over 50 percent in some states.¹ However, under the Trump Administration, immigrants - including many who were in the country legally - have been forced out of their jobs, ripped away from their families and communities, and deported to potentially violent situations. This type of cruelty serves no one and threatens to destabilize the economy and the health care system that millions of Americans rely upon. We urge you, as Secretaries of the Department of Health and Human Services and of the Department of Labor, to protect access to long-term services and supports and the immigrants who provide this essential care every day.

For years, both parties in the House and Senate have warned of the direct care workforce shortage and its potential impacts on access to long-term care.² Between 2022 and 2032, there will be an estimated 8.9 million total direct care job openings,³ making this the fastest growing occupation in the country.⁴ Demand is also expected to increase by up to 41 percent between 2022 and 2037.⁵ Furthermore, the number of Americans turning 65 and older this decade has outpaced the growth of working-age adults,⁶ and as a result, there will be

¹ "Growing Demand for Direct Care Workers Underscores Pressing Need to Address Job Quality Challenges," PHI, (September 2, 2024), <https://www.phinational.org/growing-demand-for-direct-care-workers-underscores-pressing-need-to-address-job-quality-challenges/>; "New York State's Direct Care Workforce," PHI, (January 10, 2023), <https://www.phinational.org/resource/new-york-states-direct-care-workforce-2/>.

² For example, at a House Energy & Commerce hearing on October 25, 2023, former Chair Cathy McMorris Rodgers (R-WA) delivered the following opening remarks: "Since 2020, we've lost tens of thousands of workers across both HCBS and nursing home settings, as workers left the field due to burnout or in pursuit of other career opportunities. While these stressors were present in the long-term care field prior to the pandemic, they've gotten worse, even as other parts of the health care field begin to return to pre-pandemic employment levels. The future of care for seniors and people with disabilities depends on us finding ways to support long-term care workers." See full remarks for this House Energy and Commerce Committee hearing, <https://energycommerce.house.gov/posts/chair-rodgers-opening-remarks-at-health-hearing-on-long-term-care-workforce>. In addition, former Chair Bob Casey (D-PA) discussed this issue at a Senate Aging Committee hearing on April 16, 2024: "We wouldn't have long-term care services without the long-term care workforce. Unfortunately, the workforce that provides this critical care has long been in crisis. Between 50 to over 90 percent of long-term care settings and providers report significant staffing shortages, affecting their ability to provide services, accept new clients, or even to remain open." See full remarks, https://www.aging.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/78acd1e5-9076-9816-cdd0-f46fe9bc4454/Opening_Statement_Casey_04.16.24.pdf.

³ *Supra*, note 1; Note: This is after accounting for occupational transfers and labor force exits.

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ "Workforce Projections," Health Resources and Services Administration, (March 25, 2025), <https://data.hrsa.gov/topics/health-workforce/workforce-projections>.

⁶ Luke Rogers and Kristie Wilder, "Shift in Working-Age Population Relative to Older and Younger Americans," U.S. Census Bureau, (June 25, 2020), <https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2020/06/working-age-population-not-keeping-pace-with-growth-in-older-americans.html>.

fewer potential direct care workers available to support our aging population. Given these demographic changes, we cannot rely on the U.S.-born workforce alone to meet the nation’s caregiving needs.

The consequences of workplace shortages can devastate families. For one, staffing shortages in nursing homes have been shown to be associated with increased deaths of nursing home residents.⁷ Inadequate staffing is also the cause of egregious gaps in care—nursing home residents have reported being left soiled in bed for hours, being chemically and physically restrained, and suffering from painful pressure sores and falls because there is not enough staff to care for all residents.⁸

Efforts by this Administration to deport immigrants and curb immigration will aggravate the current workforce shortage and hurt the millions of Americans who need long-term services and supports. Without the vital help of immigrant direct care workers, millions across the country will receive lower quality of care or lose access to care altogether, while others may have to rely on unpaid family caregivers, who are predominantly women, for support. This would have broad economic implications. Family caregivers may be forced to leave the workforce or reduce their work hours in order to provide care,⁹ jeopardizing their financial security. Family caregivers already lose an estimated \$522 billion in wages each year due to caregiving, while employers lose \$33 billion per year due to their employees’ caregiving roles—these economic losses would no doubt increase if the direct care workforce shortage worsens.¹⁰ Caregiving has always been a cornerstone of our economy – caregiving makes all other work possible. Counter to the Administration’s plans, patients, long-term care providers, and advocates have been calling for creating a legal pathway for immigrant care workers who are already living and working in the U.S. and an *increase* in immigration to address severe workforce shortages and prepare for the expected surge in demand due to our aging population.¹¹

Given the significant impact that threats of deportation and actions to reduce immigration would have on the nation’s long-term care system, we ask that you provide written responses to the following questions no later than Wednesday, April 23, 2025:

1. Did the Department of Health and Human Services and the Department of Labor provide guidance to the Department of Homeland Security regarding the overall risks that deportations would pose to Americans’ long-term care?
 - a. If yes, please provide a copy of all guidance.
 - b. If not, please explain why your agencies did not consult with the Department of Homeland Security.

⁷ Joshi S. Staffing Shortages, Staffing Hours, and Resident Deaths in US Nursing Homes During the COVID-19 Pandemic. *J Am Med Dir Assoc.* 2023 Aug;24(8):1114-1119. doi: 10.1016/j.jamda.2023.04.020. Epub 2023 May 8. PMID: 37253431; PMCID: PMC10165011. [https://www.jamda.com/article/S1525-8610\(23\)00411-5/pdf](https://www.jamda.com/article/S1525-8610(23)00411-5/pdf).

⁸ Jordan Rau, “Why Nursing Home Residents Still Suffer Despite Tough State Laws,” *The New York Times*, (July 12, 2024), <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/07/12/health/nursing-home-staffing-patients.html>.

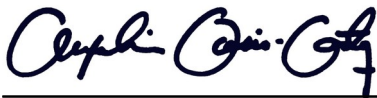
⁹ Elizabeth Harrington and Bill McInturff, “Working While Caring: A National Survey of Caregiver Stress in the U.S. Workforce: Key Findings,” Rosalynn Carter Institute for Caregivers and Public Opinion Strategies, (September 28, 2021), <https://rosalynncarter.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/210140-RCI-National-Surveys-Executive-Summary-Update-9.22.21.pdf>.

¹⁰ 2022 National Strategy to Support Family Caregivers, Administration for Community Living, (September 21, 2022), https://acl.gov/sites/default/files/RAISE_SGRG/NatlStrategyToSupportFamilyCaregivers.pdf, at 13.

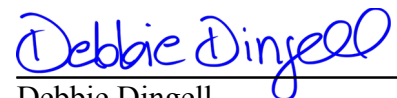
¹¹ Kimberly Bonvissuto, “Immigration reform imperative to addressing workforce shortages in long-term care,” *McKnights Senior Living*, (October 30, 2024), <https://www.mcknightsseniorliving.com/news/immigration-reform-imperative-to-addressing-workforce-shortages-in-aging-services/>.

2. The U.S. is falling behind our international counterparts who have created immigration pathways for international care workers as a solution for their labor shortages.¹² How is the Administration working with employers and unions to create and implement similar pathways to ease the labor shortage while protecting workers?
3. How does the Administration plan to address the massive workforce shortage that will worsen if immigration is curbed and immigrant workers are deported? Are there plans to increase recruitment, training, and pay for direct care workers?
4. President Trump has authorized immigration officers to make arrests in sensitive locations, including schools, churches, and health care facilities.¹³ Was the Department of Health and Human Services and the Department of Labor involved in evaluating the impact these new enforcement policies would have on the immigrants that work in health care settings and long-term care facilities, as well as the patients that they serve?
 - a. Which stakeholder groups did the Department of Health and Human Services and the Department of Labor meet with to discuss the potential impacts of its new enforcement policies, including groups that represent immigrants, patients, family caregivers, older adults, people with disabilities, the health care workforce, and the health care industry?
 - b. If the Department of Health and Human Services and the Department of Labor did not meet with organizations representing immigrants, patients, family caregivers, older adults, people with disabilities, the health care workforce, and the health care industry to evaluate the potential impacts of its enforcement policies, please explain why.

Sincerely,



Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez
Member of Congress



Debbie Dingell
Member of Congress



Diana DeGette
Member of Congress



Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress

¹² Gabriele Vogt, "Japan tentatively opens its doors to international care workers," bpb, (December 14, 2023), <https://www.bpb.de/themen/migration-integration/regionalprofile/english-version-country-profiles/543654/japan-tentatively-opens-its-doors-to-international-care-workers/>.

¹³ Ximena Bustillo and Sergio Martínez-Beltrán, "Trump administration strips schools, churches of immigration enforcement protections," (January 21, 2025), <https://www.npr.org/2025/01/21/nx-s1-5269899/trump-immigration-enforcement-schools-churches>. Note: On February 24, 2025, the U.S. District Court of Maryland issued an order blocking immigration enforcement operations in places of worship. See <https://democracyforward.org/updates/judge-blocks-ice-enforcement-in-houses-of-worship/>.



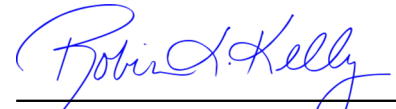
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Yvette D. Clarke
Member of Congress



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Robert J. Menendez
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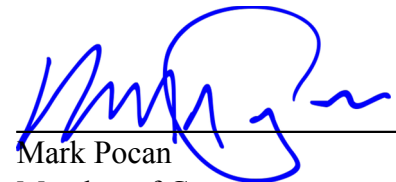
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Rashida Tlaib
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James P. McGovern
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Mark Pocan
Member of Congress




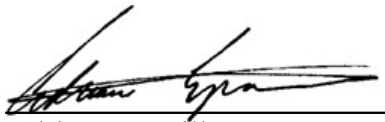
Dwight Evans
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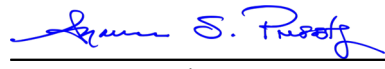



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Yassamin Ansari
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Gerald E. Connolly
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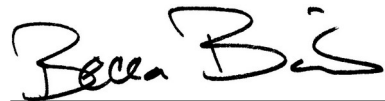

Lateefah Simon
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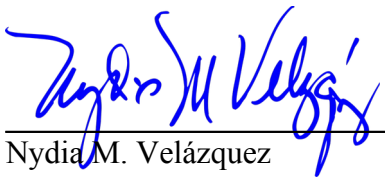

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Delia C. Ramirez
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JM Tokuda
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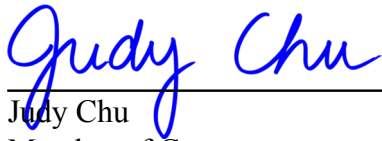

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Nydia M. Velázquez
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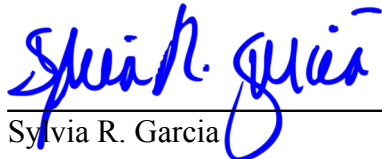

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Shri Thanedar
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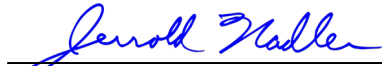

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Bonnie Watson Coleman
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