

# WHA Asks Wis. Congressional Delegation to Join Bipartisan Letter Requesting Investigation into Anticompetitive Nurse Staffing Agency Practices

## *AHA also urging extension of COVID-19 federal emergency declarations*

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WHA is asking Wisconsin members of U.S. House of Representatives to sign onto a [bipartisan letter to White House COVID-19 Response Team Coordinator Jeff Zients](#) requesting the Biden administration to investigate anticompetitive behavior from traveling nurse staffing agencies across the country. The letter is being led by Reps. Peter Welch (D-VT) and Morgan Griffith (R-VA).

In a Jan. 12 communication to Wisconsin's congressional delegation, WHA noted that some Wisconsin hospitals and health systems have seen costs increase from around \$75 per hour six months ago to more than \$200 per hour today, with a large portion of this increase suspected to be going to agency profits rather than the health care staff themselves.

To add insult to injury, these high wages at staffing agencies are leading some nurses to leave their current hospital job to work for traveling nurse staffing agencies, and WHA has also highlighted this issue with the State of Wisconsin. "Our members across the state are reporting a greater exodus of nurses, respiratory therapists and other staff leaving to work for temporary staffing agencies and then being deployed to work within the same community or region," said WHA President and CEO Eric Borgerding. "Travel nurses don't have to travel very far anymore."

These factors have combined to also impact staff morale, as long-time nurses feel frustrated to be making substantially less than agency staff that have drastically less experience working at their hospitals. To mitigate this, many hospitals have spent significantly on retention bonuses to keep these valuable staff and reward them for their loyalty.

The bipartisan letter from Congress asks for an investigation into whether this behavior is anticompetitive, noting concern that these staffing agencies are taking advantage of difficult circumstances to increase their profits at the expense of the patients and hospitals that treat them.

In a separate but related federal matter, the American Hospital Association (AHA) is urging the federal government to extend the flexibilities granted in the federal emergency declarations. In letters to Health and Human Services [Secretary Xavier Becerra](#) and [President Biden](#), the AHA asked for both an extension to the 90-day public health emergency (PHE) and a one-year extension of the national emergency declaration concerning the COVID-19 pandemic under the National Emergencies Act. Without further action, the PHE would expire on Jan. 16, and the national emergency would expire on Mar. 1.

WHA has been a strong proponent of extending these declarations in the past, due to their allowance of special waivers that aid hospitals in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. WHA has also called for the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services to [permanently retain](#) several of these waivers that improve hospitals' ability to treat patients.

Contact WHA Vice President of Federal and State Relations [Jon Hoelter](#) with questions.

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