

RESOLUTION NUMBER 46
SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON LONG-TERM HEALTH CARE FACILITIES

WHEREAS, the COVID-19 pandemic has ripped through communities and health care facilities, inflicting unimaginable suffering. Healthcare providers and frontline workers have struggled to provide the care that St. Louisans desperately need; and

WHEREAS, nursing home facilities and home care providers have been at the forefront of this need. These healthcare workers have experienced low pay and difficult working conditions for years. The pandemic exacerbated these conditions, exposing fault lines in the system. Inadequate staffing levels have become routine in many facilities; and

WHEREAS, the majority of the nursing home facilities in the City of St. Louis have collective bargaining agreements with labor unions and better health outcomes for residents who contract COVID-19 have been noted in union facilities, ensuring union access and the right to organize is an essential part of solving the long-term healthcare crisis; and

WHEREAS, the implementation of workplace safety and health programs is an essential factor in reducing the extent and severity of illnesses. It is widely known that infections are a leading cause of death and complications for nursing home residents and home care recipients. In addition to common infections that have plagued society for decades, the onset of COVID-19 has disproportionately impacted the elderly, people with disabilities, and nursing homes. St. Louisans 60 and older accounted for 80.6% of the city's COVID deaths despite accounting for only 15.9% of cases; and

WHEREAS, as of February 1st, MO ranked third to last in nursing home worker vaccination rate with only 71% of workers fully vaccinated; and

WHEREAS, staffing shortages and attrition have further strained nursing homes during the pandemic. In response to challenging working conditions, and the high risk of COVID-19 infection, some nurses, Certified Nursing Assistants, and other workers are leaving the sector during this critical time when there is an increased demand for their skills and expertise; and

WHEREAS, unless infection prevention/control in nursing homes is improved, the issue will only get worse. The resident population is increasing as baby boomers age and people are living longer. Now more than ever, it is critical for nursing home workers to be trained on safety protocols and to become vaccinated and boosted; and

WHEREAS, healthcare worker pay is often below the city recommended level of \$15 an hour; a committee should look at ways to help employers reach higher rates of pay or to provide hazard pay. Healthcare workers are often working in unsafe conditions because of inadequate staffing, substandard personal protective equipment, or other factors. It is essential for healthcare workers to be respected, protected, and paid well to do the important work that they do, and

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by the Board of Aldermen for the City of St. Louis that we direct the Health and Human Services Committee to convene a special committee for the purpose of investigating the state of the long-term care field, its non-profit and for-profit providers, its regulators, its recipients and their demographics, rates of pay, staffing pipeline, systemic problems, and possible solutions.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that by January 16, 2023 the special committee will share its findings and recommendations with the Health and Human Services Committee and upon its adoption by the Committee, with the Board of Aldermen at the next regular meeting of the Board of Aldermen. Additionally, the special committee will provide an interim report to the Health and Human Services Committee 3 months from its first convening. This report will describe policy solutions for the City of St. Louis and healthcare employers.

BE IT STILL FURTHER RESOLVED that this report will make recommendations regarding safe staffing, equitable pay, advocacy for worker safety, and worker safety training. The aforementioned special committee is not limited in size but will consist of members of the Board of Aldermen, older adults, individuals with cognitive or functional limitations, family caregivers, health care workforce members who directly provide long-term services and supports, those who have demonstrated experience in dealing with issues related to long-term services and supports/health care policy, representatives of the health care interests, and individuals from a variety of geographic areas and demographic groups. The special committee will also seek input from experts in the fields of worker safety, as well as experts in long-term care.

**Introduced this 16th day of June, 2022 by:
The Honorable Christine Ingrassia, Alderwoman 6th Ward**

Adopted this 8th day of July, 2022 as attested by:

**Terry Kennedy
Clerk, Board of Aldermen**

**Joseph Vollmer
President, Board of Aldermen**