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Coalition Urges Legislature to Restore Funding for Quality Care & Workforce Investments at Skilled Nursing Facilities

Skilled Nursing Facilities Provide 24-Hour Medical Care to California's Most Vulnerable Patients – a Lifeline for Hundreds of Thousands of Families.

What you need to know: Advocates for skilled nursing patients and providers express disappointment at the exclusion of critical funding for the Workforce and Quality Incentive Program (WQIP) in Governor Newsom's budget and calls on the Legislature to restore funding in the final budget.

SACRAMENTO - [*Supporting Skilled Nursing Patients*](#), a statewide coalition representing caregivers, patient advocates and California's 1,000+ Skilled Nursing Facilities (SNFs), issued a statement in response to Governor Gavin Newsom's January Budget proposal, urging lawmakers to restore the Workforce and Quality Incentive Program (WQIP). This funding is critical to protect access to quality care programs and workforce recruitment and retention for the care of more than 445,000 medically fragile Californians.

"California's skilled nursing facilities provide 24-hour medical care to our most vulnerable patients and their families," said **Cassie Dunham, CEO/President of the California Association of Health Facilities**. "Yet at the very moment demand is rising, and federal cuts are looming, California has cut critical funding that supports these fragile patients. Without restoring WQIP, more facilities will close, and more patients will lose access to the care they and their families need."

In July 2025, a state budget cut to WQIP funds led to a \$300 million reduction, slashing critical resources that support high-quality care and workforce investments for hundreds of thousands of skilled nursing patients. This comes as the state faces an ongoing budget deficit, Medicaid cuts from the Trump Administration, and the upcoming 2026 negotiation of a new Medi-Cal reimbursement methodology for SNFs.

"As California's population ages, the need for skilled nursing and long-term care is growing — not declining," said **Jeanee Parker Martin, President & CEO, LeadingAge California**. "WQIP is essential to maintaining access to care for hundreds of thousands of residents and the workforce that supports them."



The consequences of chronic underfunding are already clear across California:

- **Growing workforce shortages** that undermine safe staffing levels
- **Reduced access** to essential medical and rehabilitative services
- **Deferred maintenance** and deteriorating care environments
- **Rising SNF closures**, especially in rural and underserved communities where alternatives do not exist

WQIP is a proven, performance-based program that supports high-quality care, advances health equity, and strengthens the skilled nursing workforce. According to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), California ranks among the top four states in 10 separate nursing home quality performance categories. More than 100,000 caregivers, including nurses, certified nursing assistants, physicians, therapists and medical directors, rely on WQIP-supported staffing, training, and retention programs to ensure safe, high-quality care.

“As California’s aging population continues to grow, the demand for specialized, high-quality long-term care has never been greater,” said **Ashkan Javaheri, MD, President of California Association of Long Term Care Medicine**. Now is not the time to abandon nearly half a million Californians who depend on 24-hour medical care, the majority of whom rely on Medi-Cal or Medicare. WQIP is essential to supporting skilled nursing patients and strengthening the skilled nursing workforce that cares for them.”

As budget negotiations continue, the coalition is pressing lawmakers to restore WQIP funding and warns that the 2026 Medi-Cal rate-setting must deliver adequate, fair and long-term funding. Chronic underfunding of skilled nursing facilities threatens access to care for our most vulnerable patients.

ABOUT US: California’s more than 1,000 Skilled Nursing Facilities (SNFs) are the backbone of California’s long-term care system, providing essential 24-hour medical care to over 445,000 of California’s most vulnerable patients – seniors, individuals with disabilities and those recovering from serious illness or injury. Supporting Skilled Nursing Patients is a coalition advocating for fair funding for Skilled Nursing Facility patients and continued access to high-quality medical care.