



A C A D A M U S

Testimony to Assisted Living Workgroup  
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Ladies and Gentleman of the Assisted Living Workgroup:

Thank you for giving me this opportunity to share my thoughts on this very important topic with you today. I felt compelled to testify today from the unique perspective of one who has previously worked closely with state agencies across the country on the topic of education standards and enforcement. Over a decade of experience in the field of education has made me aware of the need for both uniform education requirements and the importance of enabling state agencies to adequately monitor and enforce the education standards that are statutorily required.

Let me begin my presentation by giving you a very brief history of my background in this area. In 1999, I started a company that provides pre-licensing and continuing education for mortgage professionals across the United States. At the start of my journey in the mortgage industry, similar to the issue we are discussing today, there were very few standards that were in place and even less that were enforced at the state level.

I do not need to tell you how the mortgage story ends but I will tell you that I attended many sessions similar to this meeting today where I had the opportunity to collaborate with legislative representatives and industry experts. Members of those working sessions struggled for years with the topic of education standards and enforcement before the federal government stepped in and forced a resolution to the issue.

After helping to establish the professional framework for education services within the mortgage industry, we have shifted our efforts to an

equally important and rapidly growing education space for health care professionals. Although, the bulk of my experience with education has been in the financial services industry, the need for quality education standards as well as strict enforcement capabilities remains the same across the board. As an entrepreneur who embraces free markets, open competition and growth seeking opportunities, twelve years in the industry has taught me that comprehensive standards are a critical necessity towards elevating professionalism among service providers. Quite simply, a lack of standards in an open market will eventually result in causing output to default to the lowest common denominator.

Specifically, with respect to the assisted living community, the “in-service” requirements for both direct care staff and administrators lack the necessary elements to ensure that our caregivers are well-versed and knowledgeable on all aspects of their responsibilities.

As you know under current law, administrators must complete a total of 12 in-service hours bi-annually. We support the work group's recommendation to increase the number of in-service hours and furthermore suggest that those requirements be expanded to include all ALF staff who are tasked with the day-to-day care of clients in each facility.

In regards to the language proposed by the workgroup specifying the types of acceptable courses, we recommend that you actually go further in defining a basic framework for appropriate course curriculum topics. In the Financial Services Industry, we found that if you gave education providers a wide purview when it came to curriculum topics, they would offer courses that were subpar and irrelevant to the industry that they were tasked to educate.

Additionally, we would recommend that emergency management training be added to the list of required courses for all staff. With the State of

Florida's vulnerability to hurricanes it is important to prepare those who are caring for our rapidly expanding elderly population to act quickly and confidently in the case of a natural disaster.

Furthermore, there is no easily recognized central authority to enforce the existing statutes and regulations as well as provide transparency within the education process. We recommend that you give authority and responsibility to one state agency to adopt and enforce a comprehensive set of standards for the education provider community.

The agency responsible for oversight must have the ability to enforce and regulate the entire caregiver education provider market. The oversight duties should include but not be limited to: training provider approval, course approval, periodic training reviews, changes in training standards, as well as auditing and enforcement authority. I would argue that all legitimate education and training providers should welcome this reviewing authority and be eager to participate in this process.

Finally, technologies have presented many opportunities within public and private education. Most importantly, online education has given ambitious professionals the ability to further their education during weekends, evenings and holidays while still maintaining a full-time job. This technology also presents transparency and accountability opportunities which have been adopted by many states across the country within various professions.

The technology available to us today through the use of registries and online data bases can give the regulating agencies the ability to quickly perform audits of assisted living facilities in order to ensure compliance with all education requirements. They can also be used, if desired, to track and report caregiver misconduct in order to guarantee that those who abuse the system are unable to remain in such a position. In these ways, technology can be used to help ensure that those who are entrusted with the care of one of our most vulnerable

populations will uphold the integrity of the assisted living industry in the State of Florida.

As I bring my formal comments to a close, I would like to thank all of you for dedicating your time and intellect toward improving this industry in the State of Florida. I encourage you to continue to embrace this opportunity to affect positive change in this very important and rapidly expanding sector. Our team at Acadamus stands ready to assist in any way necessary to ensure that comprehensive standards are established which can foster rapid growth while elevating the quality of care for the elderly.

I would be happy to answer any questions...