**OHIO HEALTH CARE ASSOCIATION**

**WORKFORCE COMMITTEE**

**April 11, 2022, 1:00 p.m.**

**Zoom Conference Call**

**MEETING MINUTES**

Chair John Goodman opened the meeting and welcomed committee members. He pointed to the antitrust, conflict of interest and confidentiality policies located in the online folder. Next he asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the March meeting. Committee members approved the minutes.

OHCA staff changes: Heidi McCoy announced that Josh Anderson has been hired as our Reimbursement Director. Josh will also take over the leadership of our Home Care members from Erin Hart. Heidi will take over Hospice from Erin.

Mr. Pete Van Runkle was then asked to discuss a few Public Policy Issues. First was House Bill 466. This is the legislation drafted to cap agency prices. The American Hospital Associate rescinded their name in the proposal. The legislature is off for the next two weeks so there won’t be hearings on this bill or any others for a while. It was suggested that the cap be removed but we strongly recommended keeping that language in the bill.

Next, Pete discussed that Most of the HB 169 funds have now been distributed (finally). He went on to discuss how these funds must be used for direct care costs.

Heidi McCoy then discussed the Consolidated Appropriations Act. The $1.5 trillion Consolidation Appropriations Act recent passed that allows the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services to announce a variety of efforts to increase efficiency and reduce burdens to the overall legal immigration system. Areas that are being focused on include: reduced processing backlogs, expanded premium processing, and improved access to employment authorization documents.

Ms. McCoy then went on to talk about the Dr. Lorna Breen Health Care Provider Protection Act.

President Biden recently signed the Dr. Lorna Breen Health Care Provider Protection Act into law. The goal of this law is to reduce and prevent suicide, burnout, mental health, and behavioral health conditions among health care professionals. The bill will provide grants for employee education and outreach, while studying health care worker burnout and creating a national awareness campaign.

Ms. McCoy also addressed the adding of more H-2B Visas. Due to the Citizenship and Immigration Services receiving enough petitions at the beginning of March, the departments of Labor and Homeland Security have announced an additional 35,000 H-2B worker visas will be available for the second half of fiscal year 2022. Increasing the visa cap should help immigrants help with our historic labor shortage.

Ms. McCoy then discussed improving wage rates for foreign PT’s and RN’s. A coalition of providers, including AHCA, is calling on the Department of Labor to improve the process it uses to determine prevailing wages for foreign physical therapists and registered nurses to help ease the ongoing workforce crisis. This coalition argues that the DOF should create a separate category for Schedule A instead of including it in with the permanent labor certification processing queue.

Mr. Van Runkle discussed with the committee the ending of the TNA waivers. Last week, CMS issued QSO-22-15 which terminated 19 Section 1135 blanket waivers. One of these waivers is the TNA waiver which was given a 60 day notice of termination. So the waiver ends on June 6th. TNA when have four months to pass the STNA exam (with up to three tries) to remain employable. The new QSO does address the fact that is likely impossible for all TNAs to get through the testing in the next 6 months by allowing for on ongoing waiver. A waiver may be granted if a facility or nurse aide has documentation that demonstrates their attempts to complete their training and testing (for example – timely contacts to state officials, multiple attempts to enroll in a program or test). So – after June 6th, the 75-hour on-the-job training will no longer be an option, they would have to go through the state approved STNA course. GET THEM TESTED!!

Ms. McCoy then addressed the committee, stating that the R3AP is now available to ICF Providers. Beginning on Monday, April 4th, the Regional Rapid Response Assistance Program (R3AP) is now available to ICF providers. We are certainly happy that this program was expanded to include ICF’s but we are concerned with all the hoops other providers have had to jump through to actually get any assistance. No one on the call stated that they had reached out to R3AP for assistance.

Ms. McCoy then went on to talk about Minnesota’s New Generation Nursing Assistant Initiative. The governor of Minnesota recently announced that his states Next Generation Nursing Assistant initiative recruited 1278 new CNA’s (940 enrolling in free training courses, and 338 high school students are accessing training through their school district with the state paying for their certification exam. The program, which opened in January, covers the cost of tuition, books, uniform, and certification exam fees for those interested in pursuing a career as a nursing assistant. Minnesota used 3.4 million in federal relief and 6.7 million in state money to fund the program. An additional 13.3 million has been proposed for the program for fiscal year 2024-2025. A link to the program website in in the on-line folder. The committee agreed that this program would be very beneficial in Ohio.

Ms. McCoy discussed DODD’s grant opportunity for DSP’s. DODD is creating a grant opportunity for developing programs which will focus on DSPs (inspiring confidence, reimagining recruiting, and retaining, promote career paths, support and encourage empowerment or provide quality training).   The RFP was supposed to be released at the end of March, but they ended up having to split it into 2 separate RFPs, one for training and a separate one for best practices.  They now anticipate having the RFPs available within the next couple of weeks.  There will be approximately $100,000 available between the two programs.

Mandy Smith then spoke about both the STNA Draft Rules and the LPN Programs in Career Centers. Mandy has a meeting scheduled with the Board of Nursing.

Ms. McCoy then spoke about new technology regarding feeding assistance. Independent Eating Assistive Technology – Obi link to their website is in the on-line folder. Also included on their website is information about funding and reimbursement for this cool devise.

Ms. McCoy discussed the Ohio’s Opportunities for New Americans resource. This is a resource in Ohio for all individuals who are new to America and live in Ohio. The link to the website is in the on-line folder. The purpose of this webpage is to locate cultural, social, and educational support services in the community and shows a map of where these services are provided. It may be a good opportunity to look up these contacts in your area and inform them of employment opportunities you have.

Ms. McCoy then went on to discuss DODD’s Workforce Crisis Task Force. DODD shared their Proposal Update document (that is included on the on-line folder) which includes the status of each of the initiatives that have been brought forth by the group. This task force has another meeting this Wednesday.

AHCA/NCAL’s Ukrainian Refugee assistance program was discussed by Ms. McCoy. AHCA and NCAL has teamed with local and national organizations that focus on supporting refugees from Ukraine. This partnership would offer refugees relocation assistance, job training, and employment.

Finally, Ms. McCoy addressed AHCA’s innovation solutions to the LTC staffing crisis. Due to the recent success of the Temporary Nurse Assistant training program, AHCA’s Dr. David Gifford is pudding for the creation of a new role in nursing homes that would reduce the burden upon nurses and only require minimal training. He explained that most of the calls, and most of the requests for help by residents don’t require a nursing assistance or nurse. These requests just require a nice compassionate person. More to come.