

**Lutheran Services in America**—one of the nation’s largest nonprofit networks—draws on a century-long, faith-based, mission-driven tradition of service. Through a nationwide network of nearly 300 independent health and human service providers, it operates in 46 states, Washington, DC, and Puerto Rico, reaching more than 7 million people annually—1 in 50 people in America—across 1,400 communities with the support of over 250,000 employees. The healthcare and direct service professional workforce is essential in supporting children and families, older adults, people with disabilities and others, including in rural communities.



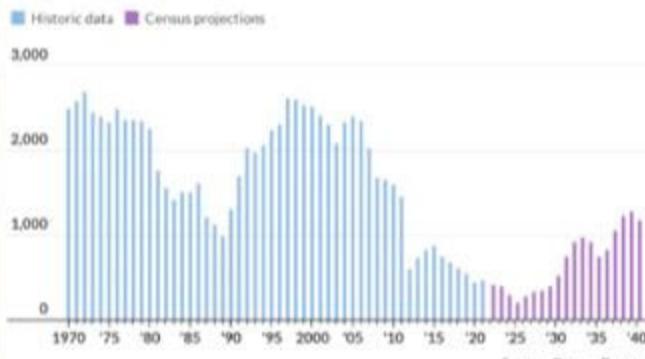
## The Issue

Across our network, workforce shortages are the top barrier to ensuring access to quality care. This is driven in part by inadequate reimbursement, with Medicaid only covering about 82% of care costs, and other rising expenses. As a result:

- 54% of nursing homes are limiting admissions.
- Patients’ hospital stays are 24% longer than in 2019.
- Providers are losing staff to higher-paying jobs outside the health and human services sector as demand for care grows. With the 85+ population set to nearly triple by 2060 while the working-age population remains flat, urgent action is needed to prevent widespread loss of essential services to older adults, people with disabilities and children.

## Labor shortage

Annual growth of working-age population (thousands)



The supply of workers is projected much slower than it was in the 1970s or 1990s. MARKETWATCH

## Our Priorities

We urge bipartisan action to strengthen the healthcare and direct support workforce, as shortages are limiting access to quality care for children and families, people with disabilities and older adults. Lutheran Services in America supports policies that:

- Improve recruitment and retention through competitive compensation (including higher Medicaid and Medicare reimbursement rates to align with true costs), safe and supportive workplaces, and expanded pathways for internationally educated workers.
- Strengthen the pipeline by expanding school-based training, education, and apprenticeships.
- Ensure workforce readiness with training, education, career pathways and greater use of technology and AI to reduce administrative burden and streamline compliance.

A variety of remedies are needed to address short-term and long-term challenges across the workforce continuum:

- Recruitment
- Retention
- Pipeline
- Readiness

Lutheran Services in America asks lawmakers to take the following actions:

## ► Recruitment and Retention

- **Support The Healthcare Workforce Resilience Act (S. 2759/H.R. 5283)**: repurposing unused green cards for internationally-educated healthcare workers to fill critical workforce gaps.
- **Support The Dignity Act of 2025 (H.R. 4393)**: modernizing visas and per-country caps to expand the pool of legally authorized workers.
- **Support The Essential Workers for Economic Advancement Act (H.R. 5494)**: creating an H-2C visa for non-degreed healthcare workers.
- **Increase Medicaid and Medicare reimbursement** to reflect the true cost of care and strengthen access for frontline workers and an aging population.
- **Expand recruitment and retention tools**, including loan forgiveness, tax credits, increased reimbursement rates, competitive wages and other incentives.



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