



Nov. 26, 2018

Alexander Acosta, Secretary of Labor  
Division of Regulations, Legislation, and Interpretation  
Wage and Hour Division  
U.S. Department of Labor  
200 Constitution NW  
Washington, D.C. 20210

The **Wisconsin Aging Advocacy Network** is a collaborative group of individuals and associations working with and for Wisconsin's older adults to shape public policy to improve their quality of life.

**Core member organizations:**

Aging and Disability Professionals Association of Wisconsin (*ADPAW*)

Alzheimer's Association SE Wisconsin Chapter

Wisconsin Adult Day Services Association (*WADSA*)

Wisconsin Association of Area Agencies on Aging (*W4A*)

Wisconsin Association of Benefit Specialists (*WABS*)

Wisconsin Association of Nutrition Directors (*WAND*)

Wisconsin Association of Senior Centers (*WASC*)

Wisconsin Institute for Healthy Aging (*WIHA*)

Wisconsin Senior Corps Association (*WISCA*)

Re: Comments on RIN 1235-AA22

Dear Secretary Acosta,

The Wisconsin Aging Advocacy Network (WAAN) supports the proposed rule to remove the current restriction on the operation of power-driven patient lifts by 16- and 17- year old workers in health care facilities.

The WAAN has frequently opposed proposals that included age alone as determinant of frailty or potential incapacity in some way for older adults and feel it is only fair to support that same right for these young members of the workforce. It is not age, but mature judgment and training that are critical for anyone who operates these power-driven patient lifts.

Safely handling and moving patients/residents is an extremely important part of the health care workers/certified nursing assistants (CNAs) job and must be done multiple times throughout a shift. These transfers can result in injury and high anxiety for both the worker and the resident if not done properly and by someone who is well trained. Quality care for those who are dependent upon CNAs to help meet their daily needs requires a sufficient supply of workers, timely response in getting needs met, and properly trained staff to do the job. Wisconsin, like most other parts of the nation, is facing a critical shortage of direct care workers. Allowing 16- and 17- year old workers, who are properly trained, to operate power-driven patient lifts will be an incentive for some employers to hire capable younger workers, will reduce resident delays in receiving care by eliminating the need to find another staff person (18 or older) to complete patient lifts, and will improve job satisfaction for current young workers who are currently unable to meet the needs of those they are caring for (as well as for other workers who will no longer need to stop what they are doing to come and assist). The ability to perform well in a job and have high job satisfaction is strongly correlated with job retention; that's a win-win for all!

In many areas of the state, the workforce shortage has hit crisis proportions. When adequate staff are unavailable to provide needed care, those seeking care are forced to look outside of their community for assistance often making it more difficult for family to visit and stay involved. Individuals/families in need of specialized care such as memory care/dementia services may have an even more difficult time finding care/services.

As we continue to explore solutions to the direct care workforce crisis, the priority must be place on recruitment of quality workers and retention of **well-trained**, qualified staff of all ages to meet the growing care needs in our communities.

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**Contact WAAN**

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Apprenticeship programs have proven to be successful in creating opportunities for high school age students to begin to explore career. The health care industry will see a growing need for workers for many years to come. Providing youth apprenticeship opportunities to work as *fully* trained CNAs will offer great opportunities to learn about the importance and rewards of working in health and long-term care.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Janet L. Zander". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J" and "Z".

Janet L. Zander, CSW, MPA, Advocacy & Public Policy Coordinator  
Greater WI Agency on Aging Resources, Inc.