



Ken Wessel, MSW, ACSW, LSW, President  
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January 14, 2014

Patricia Ann Murphy, PhD, APN  
President  
New Jersey Board of Nursing  
124 Halsey Street  
Newark, New Jersey 07101

Dear Dr. Murphy,

I am the current President of the Home Care Council of New Jersey and retired (after 36 years) Executive Director of a non-profit Health Care Service Firm in Paterson. This letter is to express, in writing, our concerns over the excessive delays in certifying new Home Health Aides.

You are no doubt familiar with this group of paraprofessionals and their struggle to support themselves in this economy. They often receive poverty-level wages in a system that always seems to look to them whenever there is belt tightening to do. Never-the-less, many women identify this field as an opportunity to better themselves and help their families. They leave any paying work they may have behind and apply for training courses throughout the State so they can learn a caring occupation and become Certified Home Health Aides. They go without income for weeks while attending BoN approved training classes. The costs of this training averages between \$500 and \$700 per student. Those costs are often born by the agency but can also be charged to the students. The training in a reputable agency is excellent and the potential aide becomes a very enthusiastic student. They are pursuing the American dream by working hard to better themselves. Many hope to go on to become nurses as many before them have done. The vast majority of these students are minority women. While they are in training, they work to get their fingerprinting done so they can go to work as soon as they finish their training. When training and testing are completed an application is sent to the Board of Nursing for their Certification. Without that Certification they cannot work as Home Health Aides in New Jersey. What happens then is cruel. The applications sit in piles at the Board's offices due to staffing shortages and inefficient bureaucratic processing. My agencies tell me the wait now for *conditional* approval is 10-12 weeks. Ten to twelve weeks without pay as their hopes fade. They frequently must find other work to pay the bills. The student or the agency has then wasted the costs of training and the dreams of these women turn into yet another disappointment. The human costs are clear to see. The costs of lost care for our frail elderly and disabled is seen by many of us out in the community. People needing care have to arrange for unqualified people to work with them or go without care. Is this not the opposite of the Board's intent?

We have offered several times to help the Board and the Division work to obtain the additional funding necessary to help staff their mandated work. We have offered to sit down with BoN staff and try to problem solve together to improve this situation. There has not been a response to these offers.

The hardships the BoN is causing potential Home Health Aides must be characterized as cruel. I know that no person in that office or on your Board wishes this to happen, but yet it continues. It is even getting worse. Please forgive my lack of skill in communicating this problem. Please do everything you can to address it as soon as you can. I hope to hear back from you prior to your February 7th Board meeting.

Thank you for your anticipated consideration.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ken Wessel". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Ken Wessel,  
President HCCNJ

cc: George Hebert

**The State Association for Non-Profit Home Care Providers**  
*Where Caring Comes First*  
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