Agency Recommendation Summary

The Workforce Board proposes a 20 percent funding reduction for the Long-Term Care (LTC) Workforce Collaborative. This action addresses budget constraints while aiming to sustain essential components. Washington's LTC staffing shortages are expected to worsen as the labor pool shrinks and the population over age 65 grows by 14 percent by 2030—exceeding 1.7 million residents—and as more individuals with disabilities or traumatic injuries require care. This DP aims to continue work to relieve shortage issues while providing an avenue to pause on certain research components.

Fiscal Summary

Fiscal Summary *Dollars in Thousands*	**Fiscal Years 2028**	**2029**	**Biennial 2027-29**	**Fiscal Years 2030**	**2031**	**Biennial 2029-31**
Operating Expenditures						
Fund 001 - 1	($121)	($121)	**($242)**	($121)	($121)	**($242)**
Total Expenditures	**($121)**	**($121)**	**($242)**	**($121)**	**($121)**	**($242)**

Decision Package Description

Given the state's significant budget challenges, the Workforce Board is recommending a reduction of approximately 20 percent, or $121,000/year to the LTC workforce budget proviso.

While this reduction will necessarily limit the scope of some program activities, the Workforce Board strongly believes that retaining expertise and capacity for developing workforce recommendations remain intact, so the proposal is for a reduction, rather than a full cut of the program. In a time when the LTC sector faces persistent staff shortages and increasing demand for care, maintaining the ability to develop recommendations and coordinate collaborative work is important for supporting improvements in LTC workforce development, even as we make difficult decisions to reduce overall funding.

Background

Washington faces a significant and growing demand for LTC services, driven by an aging population and persistent workforce shortages. Providers struggle to recruit, retain, and train staff, which impacts the quality and availability of care. These challenges underscore the urgency of the Workforce Board's LTC program to support workforce development and ensure that LTC providers can meet the needs of vulnerable populations. Washington's LTC workforce crisis leads to other negative impacts including driving healthcare costs up through hospital and emergency-department use, among other impacts.

The LTC Workforce Collaborative was established in 2022 to address critical workforce challenges in Washington's LTC sector. Its primary goal is to develop and recommend strategies for training, education, and worker retention that support providers and improve care outcomes across the state. The LTC Workforce Collaborative includes representatives from the LTC industry, state agencies, and community contributors.

The LTC Workforce Collaborative's activities focus on opportunities for improvements to the LTC workforce system, including opportunities for expansion of the statewide LTC talent pipeline, modernizing entry and licensing systems, improving care quality for older adults and people with disabilities, advancing the state's leadership in aging-technology innovation, and ensuring accountable, cross-agency governance. The LTC Workforce Collaborative coordinates agencies and partners associations to solve these challenges using existing resources where possible.

Additionally, the LTC Workforce Collaborative results include collaborating with agencies to improve licensing and testing processes, expand career development opportunities, and support employer efforts to recruit, train, and retain workers. Stakeholder dialogue ensures that recommendations are grounded in real-world experience and data, and ongoing evaluation helps monitor the effectiveness of implemented policies and programs.

The LTC Workforce Collaborative's sustained focus on workforce development is essential for building and maintaining a robust LTC workforce. Continued coordination with agencies and professionals across the state will help address workforce needs now and, in the future, supporting improvements in recruitment, retention, and training.

Proposal Description

The Workforce Board is proposing a cut of $121,000/year to an existing proviso titled Health Workforce Surveys (currently funded at $564,000/year). The proposed cut includes eliminating one of the agency's contracts with the University of Washington Center for Health Workforce Studies (UWCHWS) that provided unique analysis to better understand impacts of the LTC workforce shortages and reasons behind shortages. The cut also includes a reduction to the agency's staffing resources for the program.

This proposal would keep the core infrastructure of the LTC Workforce Collaborative intact, even as we make reductions. The agency will use existing research and policy staff to prioritize the most important components of this work and address gaps from the loss of the research contract. Essential activities will be prioritized, including:

- Continued support for the Health Workforce Sentinel Network co-run with the UWCHWS, which is critical for providing signals assessing health workforce needs in LTC settings.
- A contract with the Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC) to manage an existing GET account that was created to support LTC workers going into nursing training programs.
- The LTC Workforce Collaborative will continue to align efforts across a multi-agency workgroup on LTC, including partnerships with DSHS, the Board of Nursing, and other stakeholders to identify strategies for recruiting and retaining LTC workers. The work is grounded in partner and direct care worker engagement, qualitative and quantitative research, and ongoing communication across agencies and providers.

Assumptions and Calculations

Expansion, Reduction, Elimination or Alteration of a current program or service:

This proposal would reduce the Workforce Board's LTC program funding from the Health Workforce Surveys proviso by $121,000/year.
Historical funding for the program is as follows:
FY23 $772,000
FY24 $564,000
FY25 $564,000
FY26 $564,000
FY27 $564,000

Detailed Assumptions and Calculations:

The Workforce Board's LTC Workforce Collaborative program is funded by an ongoing annual legislative proviso of $564,000. Board staff have carefully reviewed the available program funds for areas where we could cut funding and still maintain our core responsibilities. The amount available that is not dedicated to core functions and commitments is $121,000/year.

Workforce Assumptions:

Not applicable

Historical Funding:

Not applicable

Strategic and Performance Outcomes

Strategic Framework:

This proposal maintains the Workforce Board's focus on bringing forward workforce solutions specific to LTC, while addressing a need to provide budget reduction options.

Performance Outcomes:

The proposed funding reductions will impact the scope of activities such as certain research projects and frequency of stakeholder engagement. However, the Workforce Board will be prioritizing the maintenance of a robust research and recommendation process for the LTC portfolio to maintain a focus on providing advice to policymakers on ways to address LTC workforce needs.

Performance outcomes include:

- Ongoing assessment of LTC workforce needs through the Sentinel Network and other research channels.
- Sustained collaboration with agency partners and industry stakeholders.
- Continued support for students pursuing LTC careers via WSAC contracts.
- Development and implementation of actionable workforce recommendations.
- Improved recruitment and retention strategies for LTC providers.

Process improvements will focus on streamlining agency coordination and enhancing data collection and analysis. Incremental performance metrics will track the number of workforce surveys completed, recommendations developed, students supported, and LTC employers reporting improved recruitment and retention.

These outcomes will help ensure that, despite reduced funding, the LTC Workforce Collaborative continues to address critical workforce challenges and support providers serving vulnerable populations.

Equity Impacts

Community Outreach and Engagement:

Not applicable

Disproportional Impact Considerations:

LTC Workforce Collaborative
To help mitigate these impacts, the Workforce Board is prioritizing core activities—such as maintaining the Sentinel Network and WSAC contracts for LTC students—that directly support workforce assessment, training, and recruitment. By focusing resources on these functions, the Workforce Board aims to minimize disruptions for providers serving high-need and diverse communities.

Stakeholder engagement remains central to the LTC Workforce Collaborative's approach. Ongoing communication with providers, caregivers, and affected populations will ensure that their perspectives inform policy and program recommendations. The Workforce Board will monitor outcomes and adjust strategies as needed to address any emerging inequities resulting from the funding reduction.

Workforce Board staff will also seek philanthropic opportunities to help continue this work.

Target Communities and Populations:

Not applicable

Community Inputs and Incorporation:

Not applicable

Other Collateral Connections

HEAL Act Agencies Supplemental Questions

Not applicable

Puget Sound Recovery:

Not applicable

State Workforce Impacts:

Not applicable

Intergovernmental:

Not applicable

Stakeholder Impacts:

A research contract with the University of Washington Center for Health Workforce Studies that supplemented the policy recommendation work of the LTC Workforce Collaborative will be eliminated, impacting the university's external research budget.

State Facilities Impacts:

Not applicable

Changes from Current Law:

Not applicable

Legal or Administrative Mandates:

Not applicable

Governor's Salmon Strategy:

Not applicable

IT Addendum

Does this Decision Package include funding for any IT-related costs, including hardware, software, (including cloud-based services), contracts or IT staff?

No

Objects of Expenditure

Objects of Expenditure *Dollars in Thousands*	**Fiscal Years**		**Biennial**	**Fiscal Years**		**Biennial**
	2028	**2029**	**2027-29**	**2030**	**2031**	**2029-31**
Obj. A	($15)	($15)	**($30)**	($15)	($15)	**($30)**
Obj. B	($8)	($8)	**($16)**	($8)	($8)	**($16)**
Obj. E	($98)	($98)	**($196)**	($98)	($98)	**($196)**

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