

# Careers abound for helping people in long-term care

By Mark Klyczek  
Guest Columnist

The vulnerable population needs us. And we need skilled individuals to meet that need.

The health care industry, among others, is experiencing a staffing transition. Skilled nursing staff, in particular, is rebounding slowly from job losses since March 2020, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Nationwide, there are 400,000 open positions — 9,000 in Virginia alone — to close the gap from pre-pandemic levels. A survey of nursing home providers nationwide, released in June by the American Health Care Association, found 87% have moderate to high staffing shortages and 98% are having difficulty hiring staff.

We need to attract and develop new talent and focus on retaining current employees who can transition to long-term care in a post-pandemic society. We aim to recruit caring, passionate team members who want to care for the aging population.

Virginia Health Services (VHS) owns and operates seven nursing and rehabilitation centers and two assisted living communities in Newport News, Hampton, York County, Gloucester and Kilmarnock, in addition to an independent living community in



Mitzi Hansrote, right, 86, and Deanna Sutton, center, 83, check in before receiving the COVID-19 vaccine on Jan. 21, 2021, at the Isles of Vero Beach assisted and independent senior living community in Vero Beach, Fla. There are many opportunities in Virginia for individuals interested in careers in long-term care. **WILFREDO LEE/AP**

Port Warwick, and offers services in home health care, outpatient physical, speech and occupational rehab and hospice care.

Delivering care rests on the shoulders of our team members, who are the foundation of our organization. It takes skilled, dedicated professionals to perform the hard work of caring for the aging population. We are proud and thankful for our team

and we want to help all of our team members succeed and grow.

While staffing agencies temporarily fill the gaps, it is not a sustainable solution due to cost and a lack of consistency. The individuals in our care benefit from dedicated, consistent, skilled staff 24/7. While our pay is competitive, what sets VHS apart from other organizations is that we offer a satisfying career in

communities that embrace team members like family.

If a career in health care has ever been appealing, now is a great time to discover your role in long-term care. Positions are available, not only for nursing staff, but in departments including dietary and dining, environment services, administration and accounting.

At VHS, we often have team members start in one role, such as housekeeping or dietary, and go through our apprenticeship to be a Certified Nurse Aide (CNA). They become drawn to working more closely with the residents.

The VHS earn-as-you-learn apprenticeship program is one example of our investment in developing a great workforce locally. It is open to individuals interested in earning their certification to become CNAs. The program also covers the cost of the certification exam after graduation, and will be expanded to dietary and environmental services positions. We have had 68 students graduate from the training.

Our team members have access to a variety of training and development opportunities. We have partnerships with ECPI University and Southern University for discounted tuition for our employees and their dependents.

We have in-house training and in services with our education team. Support is available throughout the company to help our team members grow their skills and advance.

And we promote from within. Two team members recently completed the administrator-in-training program and are studying to take their administrator license exams. They are both assistant administrators in our company.

“Something that’s really unique about VHS’s culture is they help you grow and promote from within,” said one of our assistant administrators.

Long-term care needs more individuals to join its ranks. Those in our care and their loved ones deserve the best we can provide to support them living their best life, and that is only through the strength of our team. The team at VHS is dedicated to both investing in developing our workforce, and growing our existing team to serve the needs of our community.

*Mark Klyczek is the president and CEO of Virginia Health Services, headquartered in Newport News. Learn more about careers with our organization at [vahs.com/careers](http://vahs.com/careers). Email him at [mklyczek@vahs.com](mailto:mklyczek@vahs.com).*

# Abortion ban would position Virginia in poor company

By Philip Shucet  
Guest Columnist

The 12 states currently enforcing total abortion bans are the same states doing the poorest jobs of preserving and protecting the lives of people living in those states.

That irony should not be lost on Virginians as Gov. Glenn Youngkin and some members of the General Assembly pursue harsher abortion restrictions.

These 12 states are: Alabama, Arkansas, Idaho, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas and Wisconsin.

Here’s a snapshot of what it’s like to live in these states:

■ Poverty affects 11% to 20% of the people. Six of these states are among the 10 poorest in the U.S.

■ Food insecurity — hunger — affects 9% to 15% of people living in these states. Residents suffering from hunger in eight of the states are among the 10 most food-insecure populations in the country.

■ Obesity affects 30% to 41% of people in these states. Seven states are in the top 10 for the highest obesity rates in the U.S.

■ Premature deaths in seven of these states fall among the 10 highest premature death rates in the country.

■ Nine of these states make no abortion exceptions for rape or incest. One makes no exception for

incest. All 12 strip women of their most fundamental rights in the most horrible of circumstances.

■ Nine of these states are led by Republican governors and legislatures. The other three are governed by Republican majorities in both legislative chambers.

These states are bellwethers for others who are trying to impose harsher abortion restrictions or total bans on the rights of women and their families.

The unfortunate and negative social and health-related effects of poverty, obesity and hunger that contribute to premature death do not define the character of the people in these states. But these facts do say something about the possible longer-term consequences of elected officials pushing right-wing conservative ideologies.

Is this the club Virginia wants to join?

Youngkin champions conservative policies and has asked four legislators to lead efforts to find consensus on abortion legislation that would restrict a pregnant woman’s freedom of choice to a 15-week threshold. But Youngkin would go further and has signaled that he’s willing to consider heavier restrictions. In late June the governor said, “Any bill that comes to my desk I will sign happily and gleefully in order to protect life.”

Three members of the General



Protesters march down Broad Street on June 24 in Richmond during a protest against the U.S. Supreme Court’s overturning of Roe v. Wade. **ARMOND FEFFER/TIMES-DISPATCH**

Assembly and one congressman — Del. Marie March, R-Floyd; Sen. Travis Hackworth, R-Tazewell; Del. Dave LaRock, R-Loudoun; and U.S. Rep. Bob Good, a Republican who represents Virginia’s 5th Congressional District — are also promoting total abortion bans.

March and Hackworth said they will introduce bills to ban abortion in Virginia. March says her position is not negotiable. Hackworth said he wants a “dignified and respected future for all Virginians — from conception to old age.” Hackworth should know that stripping women of their rights and relegating them to second class citizens is not respectful or dignified at any age.

Good has been vocal at rallies; he wants the governor to push for a total ban on abortion and has said that abortion should be eliminated and not negotiated.

All three, March, Hackworth and Good, would willingly take rights away from women.

LaRock has said, “I think anything that would make women want fewer abortions is a win in the next few years.” Let’s be clear here, LaRock is not talking about what women want; he is suggesting what amount of freedom he thinks women should have.

Pregnancy is serious. And serious discussions and choices about pregnancy belong in the hands of women, their families and health providers. Not in the hands of

politicians.

Conditions in Virginia flourish when we stay on either side of political middle ground. Fortunately, overall living conditions here are currently better than in the states imposing the harshest restrictions.

The governor and our representatives have full plates of issues that affect the lives of more than 8 ½ million people across Virginia. Rather than pandering to the sanctimonious, they should stay focused on improving those lives.

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# Inflation act marks important moment for climate action

By Pat Jacobson  
and Chris Wiegard  
Guest Columnists

The Inflation Reduction Act will have important consequences for the greatest threat to the future of Hampton Roads: sea level rise.

One part of the sea level rise threat in Hampton Roads has been Virginia state policy, as the incoming Youngkin administration has tried to end Virginia’s participation in the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI). This effort has so far failed, but has been very controversial in our region because hundreds of millions of dollars that RGGI provides for flood preparedness and coastal resilience efforts in Virginia would be eliminated if Virginia pulls out of the program. The price tag for building coastal resilience in Hampton Roads is several billion dollars, so the elimination of any revenue stream for that objective is threatening to Hampton Roads residents concerned about flood risk. But the federal Inflation Reduction Act addresses the sea level issue from a different angle, and on a much larger scale.

The Inflation Reduction Act



Neighbors help a stranded driver after her car got stuck after attempting to drive through high waters on West Princess Anne Road in the Ghent neighborhood of Norfolk after heavy rainfall on Aug. 11, 2020. **STAFF FILE**

will provide some coastal resilience funding, but focuses on the carbon emissions that drive flooding. We must understand the chain of events. Increased emissions of carbon dioxide and methane from human activities, such as fossil fuel burning and leaks from methane wells, result in the trapping of heat from the sun in our global atmosphere. This heat especially pervades the polar regions, resulting in melt-

ing of ice sheets on top of Greenland and Antarctica. The water then pours down into the sea, making the global ocean deeper. NOAA projects that current rates of carbon emissions will result in as much as 3-7 more feet of water at the Norfolk waterfront by the year 2100. That is simply too much water to keep out of buildings with infrastructure improvements alone, and for that reason reducing carbon emissions is

vital.

Economists calculate that the bill that just passed the Senate and House will reduce U.S. carbon emissions by up to 40% from 2005 levels by the year 2030. Part of this reduction will be achieved by charging methane drilling companies for the amount of methane that leaks from their wells, because methane is a very potent greenhouse gas. The biggest part of the emission reductions will come from the tax credit features which encourage utilities to replace fossil fuel plants with electricity generation from renewable energy. Another small part will come from accelerating the growth of electric vehicles.

It has been a long wait for this bill. In the next couple of decades, the other 60% of U.S. carbon emissions need to be phased out as well. How can we get that to happen? More federal legislation. How can we get other nations to follow our lead? We must use trade tariffs to punish other nations that refuse to reduce their own carbon emissions. These tariffs are called “carbon border adjustments” and we will hear more about them later as Congress awakens to

the need to force other nations to move from talk to action on climate.

The Inflation Reduction Act is an indispensable section of the path to sea level rise survival for Hampton Roads. It is important for constituents of U.S. Reps. Elaine Luria, Bobby Scott and Donald McEachin, and U.S. Sens. Mark Warner and Tim Kaine to contact those legislators to thank them for their support for the bill.

Looking ahead, citizens of Hampton Roads must support more resilience efforts and emission reduction efforts on the local, state, national and international levels. The futures of our grandchildren depend on this. Rather than a time for relaxation and celebration, we enter an era already filled with visible consequences of climate change, but informed by the knowledge that collective solutions are achievable. We waited 30 years for this first step. We must not wait even three years for the next step.

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