Lawmakers examine senior-care issues

Jochum points to a ‘$60 million hole’ in Iowa’s Medicaid budget. A Stonehill employee says he is concerned about the lack of qualified direct-care workers.

Mike Burley

Iowa state Sen. Pam Jochum, D-Dubuque, told Tuesday with seniors at Stonehill Care Center in Dubuque, Jochum and three fellow state lawmakers from the area came to Stonehill for a discussion on issues surrounding the senior-care industry.

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Reasonable, he said.

“It has to be compensation that really appeals direct care as a valued profession, (making it) a career (people) want to stay in,” Manc said.

Jochum agreed, noting that about 70,000 people work in the industry statewide.

“What can we do to professionalize it, to have some educational requirements that everyone has to attain to get this job, and what can we do to improve the wages?” she asked. “When you’re making $8 or 10 dollars an hour, you just can’t make ends meet.”

The meeting was one of Finkenauer’s first as an elected official, having won the right to succeed Iowa Rep. Pat Murphy, D-Dubuque, in the Nov. 4 election. The conversation was enlightening, she said after the meeting.

“We really need to focus on the funding and making sure that our CNA’s get paid what they deserve, get paid a living wage, and then also making sure that our facilities are taken care of,” Finkenauer said.