

Steven Sepe

From: Laura Ramsey <noreply@adv.actionnetwork.org>
Sent: Tuesday, March 26, 2024 1:05 PM
To: House Health and Human Services Committee
Subject: I support the Workforce Standards Board Bill (H-7733 | (S-2621)

Committee Clerk Steven Sepe,

Dear Dear Honorable Members of the House and Senate Committees on Health and Human Services,

I am writing a comment in support of the Workforce Standards Board Bill (WSB) (H-7733 | (S-2621) and urge you vote yes for its passage. Since it was passed, the Nursing Home Staffing and Quality Care Act has not been enforced and thousands of nursing home residents and caregivers continue to suffer from an ongoing care crisis. Rhode Island ranks 38th in the nation for nursing home staffing levels and immediate jeopardy findings have increased by 138% from 2022 to 2023, including at least eight tragic, preventable deaths.

Last summer I suffered from a tumor in my spine that affected the nerves to my legs. Eight months later I am still learning to walk again. I was in the hospital for over six weeks. During that time I was cared for by many CNA's and was constantly amazed at the care and attention that they provided me, and I also learned a bit about their lives. I was shocked when I found out how little CNA's are paid; it's such a stark contrast to the high level of care that I was provided. I'm not surprised to learn that many CNA's burn out and move on to other careers that provide a living wage with much less difficult work. While I was able to avoid staying in a nursing home, I know a lot of people in my position are not so fortunate, and they deserve the very best care from people who are paid well with fair working conditions.

The Workforce Standards Board needs to be part of a holistic plan to enforce nursing home staffing standards, raise wages, mandate essential training for caregivers and hold for-profit owners accountable to how they spend public funds. Corporate nursing homes in RI amass over \$100 million annually (mostly taxpayer dollars), with care quality suffering due to understaffing. 12,000 out of the 18,000 CNAs registered in Rhode Island are not currently working in healthcare; we need to attract them back by offering better wages and conditions. The RIPTA Board's recent minimum wage increase to \$25/hr for bus drivers doubled job

applications, demonstrating the positive effect of wage improvements on workforce recruitment.

With the recent executive order indefinitely suspending fines for nursing homes that violated the staffing law, we urgently need a solution in place that raises job standards for caregivers to attract them back into the field and turn the corner on the staffing crisis. The Workforce Standards Board provides a data-driven, collaborative vehicle to stabilize our nursing home system and give residents the care they deserve. Please vote yes on Workforce Standards Board Bill (H-7733 | (S-2621).

Most sincerely,

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