



To: House Health & Human Services Committee
From: Karen Malcolm, Protect Our Healthcare Coalition, ProtectRIHealth@gmail.com
Date: March 26, 2024
Re: **SUPPORT H7733** – Nursing Home Workforce Standards Board

The Protect Our Healthcare Coalition is a group of leading Rhode Island non-profits and consumer groups with a shared mission to protect, improve, and expand equitable access to quality, person-centered, affordable health care for all. The Coalition strongly **supports House Bill 7733** because it will raise the standard of care for vulnerable nursing home patients.

A 2022 consensus report from the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine noted that “Nursing homes play a unique dual role in the long-term care continuum, serving as a place where people receive needed health care and a place they call home.¹” Among their conclusions, the researchers highlight that “the current system often fails to provide high-quality care and underappreciates and underprepares nursing home staff for their critical responsibilities. They further conclude that **“immediate action to initiate fundamental change is necessary.”**”

In Rhode Island, the number of serious deficiencies reported between 2021 and June 2023 has seen a significant rise—from an average of 5.8 to 8.8 per certified home². These deficiencies are indicators of problems that can gravely affect the health and safety of our nursing home residents. With an estimated 6,900 Rhode Islanders currently residing in nursing homes, the need for immediate action to improve their care is undeniable.

If passed, bill H7733 would establish a 13-member board. Among the board's primary functions would be implementing policies to enhance care quality, including setting standards for caregiver training to meet the diverse needs of our residents. By doing so, **this bill has the potential to not only improve patient care but also elevate the status and effectiveness of our nursing home workforce.** This is important because, for too long, low staff salaries and benefits combined with inadequate training have made the nursing home a highly undesirable place of employment, especially for CNAs.

We urge the Committee to support H7733, which would improve the well-being and quality of life for our thousands of nursing home patients and their caretakers.

Thank you.

Protect Our Healthcare Coalition allies & partners: Economic Progress Institute, Mental Health Association RI, RIPIN, The Womxn Project, RI Health Center Association, United Way of Rhode Island, Planned Parenthood of Southern New England, SEIU Rhode Island Council, RI Medical Society, American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network, Leukemia/Lymphoma Society, Foster Forward, RI Coalition for the Homeless, Mental Health Recovery Coalition, Oasis Wellness & Recovery Center, RI Community Food Bank, Substance Use & Mental Health Leadership Council, Rhode Island Coalition for Children and Families, HousingWorksRI, Rhode Island Organizing Project (RIOP), RI NOW, RI Psychological Association, Thundermist Health Center, National Association of Social Workers RI Chapter, Advocates for Better Care

¹ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK584660/>

² <https://www.kff.org/other/state-indicator/avg-of-nursing-facility-deficiencies/>