



March 26,2024

To: Representative Susan Donovan, Chair  
Members House, House Health and Human Services Committee

From: Maureen Maignet, Policy Advisor, Senior Agenda Coalition of RI

The Senior Agenda Coalition of RI supports the intent of H7733, the NURSING HOME WORKFORCE STANDARDS BOARD ACT sponsored by Representative Slater.

Founded in 2002, our organization has been a leading organization working to promote a good quality of life for older adults in Rhode Island. Our Coalition prioritizes issues that help older Rhode Islanders maintain choice and dignity in their living and social environments. We are a voice for the protection and promotion of public and private programs that protect seniors' quality of life whether they live at home and in the community or reside in nursing facilities.

In recent years the nursing home industry in the State has undergone a number of challenges including dealing with the significant impact on residents, families and staff resulting from the COVID pandemic along with a continuing staffing shortage. There have been facility closures and ownership changes with more facilities now owned by for-profit corporations. In the past two years, the number of inspection reports conducted by the Department of Health showing Immediate Jeopardy (a serious adverse outcome or likely serious adverse outcome; as a result of noncompliance, serious injury, harm, impairment or death has occurred, is occurring, or is likely to occur to one or more identified recipients at risk) has increased. These have included instances of serious medication errors, elopements and failure to obtain dialysis when ordered. They warrant development of nursing home workforce standards to ensure our vulnerable nursing home residents receive the quality care we would want for ourselves and our loved ones.

The establishment of a Nursing Home Workforce Standards Board, as called for in the bill, would include relevant state agency heads, nursing home employers and workers, the State long term care ombudsman and community organizations that deal with the Medicaid population. Ideally, such a representative Board would be able to monitor market conditions impacting the nursing home industry, and come to agreement on the minimum standards relating to worker training, compensation and working standards required under the legislation.

The Senior Agenda Coalition recognizes that many of the state's nursing homes are facing significant financial challenges. The language at 23-17.29-4 (b) seems to imply that new standards would only take effect following sufficient appropriation and federal approval. We assume this means state budget appropriation and want to clarify if this is the case. In addition, we ask that the enforcement provisions in the bill be carefully vetted by the Committee for their reasonableness and potential impact.

Respectfully submitted,

Maureen Maignet