

Testimony in support of H 7733

An Act Relating to Health and Safety – Nursing Home Workforce Standards Board Act
House Committee on Health & Human Services

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Nina Harrison, Policy Director, the Economic Progress Institute

The Economic Progress Institute strongly supports Representative Slater’s H 7733, which would create the Nursing Home Workforce Standards Board to establish and enforce industry-wide quality of care standards in nursing homes.

Rhode Island’s seniors deserve access to quality, comprehensive elder care; workforce standards provide necessary and critical protections for elders and the dedicated people that work to care for them. By the year 2030, the number of Rhode Islanders aged 65 to 74 is expected to double. By 2040, the number of Rhode Islanders aged 85 and over is expected to increase by 72%¹ In comparison, the number of caregivers available to assist our aging population continues to decline as CNA’s are overworked, underpaid, and underappreciated. In turn, this is contributing to low staffing, high turnover rates, and deficiencies in care across the state. Through numerous studies, we know that as the number of providers drops, the quality of care residents receive also declines, as there are not enough staffers to safely treat patients. Without sufficient resources or adequate compensation for workers, we can expect to see the quality of care decline as CNA’s leave the industry. Implementing a Workforce Standards Board (WSB) will ensure that nursing homes across the state have the necessary resources they need to properly care for some of the most vulnerable Rhode Islanders.

By monitoring market conditions, the board will work to set minimum statewide compensation and working standards for nursing home workers. Violations of these protections would be investigated by the Department of Labor and Training, ensuring compliance by employers, and providing safer conditions for CNAs and patients. The Board will work to address the evolving needs of today’s population by implementing policies that enhance care quality, such as mandating essential training for caregivers. Furthermore, the board will engage community stakeholders by facilitating a collaborative environment through inclusive dialogue, fostering unity and establishing shared goals.

As Rhode Island’s elder population continues to grow, we cannot afford to let the burgeoning elder care workforce crisis worsen – we cannot allow our elders and their caregivers to suffer physically or financially. We strongly urge passage.

¹ <https://www.rilegislature.gov/Reports/AginginComm%20Exec%20SummaryFinal.pdf>