

March 25, 2025

House Committee on Health and Human Services  
Rhode Island State House

Re: Testimony supporting House Bill 5169, empowering residents of assisted living facilities in RI

Dear Chair Donovan and Honorable Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to share this testimony to support House Bill 5169.

**We are the leaders of the first independent resident council in a Rhode Island assisted living facility.  
It has not been easy for us to get going, but it's totally been worth it.**

I had called the ombudsman office and I told them people weren't getting showers and their laundry wasn't getting done, and the ombudsman told me the residents had to call for themselves. Then we got the idea to have a group that would speak up for everyone. We needed to speak up for the people who couldn't speak up for themselves. At the town hall meetings run by the administrators we didn't feel we were being heard, and residents were upset about it, when issues and concerns were raised, we were told "if you are not happy here, there are a lot of other facilities you may be happier at" residents were upset about it so they wouldn't speak up at meetings then they stopped coming.

At the beginning we had a couple meetings in secret, but the administrators found out and came and asked me, and you could tell they weren't happy. They weren't encouraging. But since we have been having meetings regularly and helping them make improvements, they are helping us. We invited them to our last meeting which was very productive.

Here are a few of our successes so far:

We have got dangerous loose boards replaced on the deck.

People are getting showers when scheduled

Residents are getting their laundry done in a timely manner.

People's pendants have been fixed, and batteries were replaced (75% of people's pendants weren't working because the batteries were dead, and we got them all fixed and now they are monitored weekly and are answered in a timely manner..)

We got the medication stations to make it easier for residents to receive their medication.

Residents love the resident council meetings and individually come and tell us their problems. They love having a safe forum to voice their issues and concerns where they know they're safe from reprisals. We get around 40 residents. (out of approximately 70 residents). There are no empty seats in our large theater, our town hall meetings never made improvements like we have. The living conditions have improved and residents are happier, they are happy with the accomplishments that have been made.

**We want all assisted living residents in RI to be able to do this, but it took a lot of work before we showed administrators that they had to work with us. Not everyone should have to work as hard just to get started.** Some are afraid and don't know how to get going. It will be easier if the administrator puts the meetings on the calendar, and lets you have a space for your meetings, and if they have to respond to your concerns without you having to call the ombudsman.

We support House Bill 5169 because it will help residents at other facilities achieve what we've done. Everyone should be able to advocate for themselves freely.

Maryellen Kline  
Wayne R Garland  
Jacquelyn Larson

Resident council co-leaders