



March 24, 2025

House Committee on Health and Human Services
Rhode Island State House
Househealthandhumanservices@rilegislature.gov

Re: **Testimony in Support of HB 5169: Empowerment of Residents in Assisted Living Facilities**

Dear Chair Donovan and Members of the Committee,

My name is Lori Light, and I serve as the Rhode Island State Long Term Care Ombudsman. My office advocates solely for the health, welfare, and best interests of residents in long-term care. I am writing in strong support of **House Bill 5169** because it is designed to **empower residents and ensure transparency** in assisted living facilities.

While industry representatives claim to support independent resident councils, that has not been the experience of my office. In reality, most facility administrators prefer to address concerns with individuals privately rather than engaging with a group. This reluctance discourages residents from organizing and collectively advocating for their needs. Fall of 2023, my office requested that every facility in the state share information about the monthly care partner support meetings we initiated. Disappointingly, we found that **very few facilities shared this information** with residents and families. This demonstrates the ongoing barriers to resident and family engagement—barriers that HB 5169 seeks to eliminate.

At its core, **this bill reinforces a fundamental right**—the right of residents to gather, express concerns, and support one another. Assisted living residents enter these facilities for **assistance**, not to relinquish their autonomy. They should retain **the same rights they would have if they were still living in the community**, including the ability to form and participate in councils without interference.

Additionally, **HB 5169 addresses a major issue—transparency in rate increases**. Every week, my office receives calls from distressed families who find their loved ones **outliving their financial resources** due to unexpected fees. These include charges for medication administration, latex gloves, and even penalties for refusing or requiring assistance with showers. Families are often blindsided by these costs, forcing them into crisis situations. Residents and families deserve **clear, upfront disclosures** of historical rate increases and advance notice of fee changes so they can make informed decisions about their care and financial future.

**OFFICE OF THE RHODE ISLAND STATE
LONG TERM CARE OMBUDSMAN**

Located in Alliance for Better Long Term Care, Inc.

422 Post Road Suite 204, Warwick, RI 02888
Office: (401) 785-3340 | **Fax:** (401) 785-3391



Simply put, **people have the right to know what they are signing up for**. HB 5169 is a critical step toward ensuring fairness, transparency, and respect for the rights of assisted living residents. I urge you to support this bill.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Lori Light
Rhode Island State Long-Term Care Ombudsman

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