



Date: March 27, 2025

**To: The Honorable Susan Donovan, Chair
Members, House Health & Human Services Committee**

**From: Carol Costa, Executive Director
Senior Agenda Coalition of RI (SACRI) 70 Bath Street PVD, RI**

**Re: H5257, AN ACT RELATING TO HEALTH AND SAFETY -- NURSING HOME
WORKFORCE STANDARDS BOARD ACT**

SACRI is pleased to support H5257 sponsored by Representatives Slater, Diaz, Potter, O'Brien, DeSimone, Stewart, Voas, Cruz, Morales

H5257 creates a 13-member Nursing Home Workforce Standards Advisory Board including direct care staff, resident advocacy organizations, nursing home management representatives, key state agency staff and the state long term care ombudsman. The Department of Labor and Training Director would oversee the Advisory Board.

SACRI recognizes that nursing homes are a critical component of our long term service system and has a long history of advocating for quality long term care and supporting our state's long term care workers. Nursing homes in Rhode Island, as in other states across the country, were heavily impacted by the Covid 19 pandemic. Deaths from Covid 19 occurred disproportionately among older persons and nursing home residents. As of January 2022, at least 23% of all deaths from Covid occurred in long term care facilities among residents and staff.¹ Many staff left the nursing home workforce; nursing home occupancy decreased and is just now returning to pre-Covid levels. Challenges in providing quality nursing home care continue post-Covid. Staff shortages and high rates of staff turnover prevail. Substandard care increased in the last two years going from 15 to 35 from 2022 to 2024 instances (RI Department of Health). These included serious medication errors, elopements, abuse/neglect and hospitalizations and deaths.

Government funds a significant portion of nursing home care – R.I. Medicaid spent close to \$1Billion in the last 3 years on nursing home care. (RI budget Office 2026 technical report). It is important for state legislators to understand the industry -- its regulatory environment, how it is funded and the status of its workers who every year provide care to about seven thousand vulnerable older adults and persons with disabilities. The Advisory Board would advise the general assembly on market conditions, wages and benefits and recommend minimum statewide compensation and working standards for nursing home workers. The Advisory Board can inform members of the legislature about best practices for providing quality nursing home care including staffing standards. I would encourage the Advisory Board to also look at the physical environments of our nursing homes as for the most part they were built many years ago based on an institutional hospital model with 2-bed rooms and shared bathrooms. They are not the home-like environments today's consumers prefer. It is time we reimagine nursing homes to promote smaller-type homes such as the Greenhouse model with its greater focus on resident-directed care.

1. <https://www.kff.org/policy-watch/over-200000-residents-and-staff-in-long-term-care-facilities-have-died-from-covid-19/>