

The Village Common of Rhode Island

Aging Better Together

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

The Honorable Susan R. Donovan, Chair

Testimony by H. Philip West, Jr., on March 27, 2025,
in support of 25-H 5257 by Rep. Scott A. Slater, et. al.

Rhode Island Nursing Home Workforce Standards Advisory Board

Thank you, Chairwoman Donovan and members of the House Committee on Health and Human Services for this hearing. **I testify in support for 25-H 5257 by Rep. Scott Slater, legislation that would create an advisory board to address significant issues in the nursing home industry.**

My name is H. Philip West, Jr., and I serve as a volunteer lobbyist on behalf of The Village Common of Rhode Island, a statewide non-profit that helps older adults stay safely and independently in homes they love. Our approach saves money and lives. Our motto is: "Aging Better Together."

The Village Common is deeply concerned about significant workforce challenges faced by providers of care for older adults and disabled persons of all ages. We understand the challenge nursing facilities face in recruiting and retaining direct care workers.

Most of the workers in the nursing home industry are women, often women of color. Many earn less than \$15/hour, a wage that does not come close to covering basic living expenses for a single person, much less a family.

A woman I've known for thirty years is a Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) but still makes only \$16/hour. Before the Affordable Care Act, she never had health care. She recently had surgery for cancer, and Medicaid paid more than \$50 thousand for her treatment. She is 70 and would love to retire, but she has no pension. Payments from Social Security will never cover her rent and modest costs of living.

Across Rhode Island, thousands of workers like her are exhausted, stressed, overworked, and often underappreciated. They need public support, and Representative Slater's bill points the way to a self-correcting advisory process capable of guiding the General Assembly, the Department of Labor, and others responsible for the vital services these workers provide 24/7.

The legislative findings (page 1/lines 1-15) are sound, and the advisory board (page 2/lines 1-24) will include a balanced group of stakeholders capable of reaching consensus. The powers and duties of the advisory board (page 2/lines 25-32) are clear and appropriate. Ensuring that the advisory board receive essential data (page 2/line 33 through page 4/line 3) is crucial.

The title of the new advisory board appears correctly in the heading and text (page 2/lines 2-5) but not in the capital-letter title (page 2/line 1). The Village Common recommends that the title be corrected by adding the word "advisory" (page 1/line 1) before passage.

Rep. Slater's legislation will create a balanced and empirically grounded advisory board focused on skilled nursing facilities. It should make a valuable contribution to the well-being of residents, staff, and their families. On behalf of The Village Common, I urge the Committee on Health and Human Services to correct the title and recommend 25-H 5257 for passage by the full House.

Respectfully,



H. Philip West Jr., Lobbyist #12757
hphilipwestjr@icloud.com