



**House Committee on Municipal Government and Housing
February 4th 2021
H 5035**

Statement by James Nyberg, Executive Director

LeadingAge RI represents non-profit long-term care providers across the spectrum, including affordable senior housing providers. On behalf of these members, I appreciate the opportunity to express our concern about this legislation to require elderly housing providers with 100 or more units to have a generator that powers individual apartment units. Currently, generators are used in senior housing to provide power for elevators, emergency lighting, and common areas.

Our concern with a requirement that individual units be connected to a generator is quite simple – they do not have any funding to comply with such a mandate. These properties are financed by the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and operate under detailed regulations governing the rent they can charge to residents, among other issues. So, there is no apparent way that they could cover the significant cost associated with this bill because they cannot pass along the cost to their residents, and there are no other funding sources. For example, connecting every unit to a generator would entail wiring that would need to be snaked through walls and ceiling throughout the entire building (with cut outs as needed, and which might not even be possible depending on the building) and all tying into a generator which would need to be able support that load. Residences that currently have generators could not handle an electrical load of an additional 100 outlets and would need to obtain another. The financial burden of this would be well into the hundreds of thousands of dollars. For a 100 unit development, it could cost up to \$400,000 according to one estimate from a member of mine.

We do appreciate the concern about frail individuals in senior housing who require oxygen or medications stored at cold temperatures. Providers do have power in the common areas specifically for these situations, and there have been no issues that I know of. In addition, most of these individuals are registered in the state's Special Needs Registry, which is specifically focused on helping individuals on oxygen or other life support systems.

It should also be noted that such a requirement to connect individual units to generators does not exist in other apartment properties, including market-rate properties in which plenty of older individuals reside.

One suggestion that might better support senior housing during a power outage would be to prioritize them for restoration by National Grid. That would help ensure their safety and well-being.

Thank you for your interest in this issue and your consideration of these comments.