8 July 2020

Dear Finance Committee Member:

Our nursing home is worried about its future. There is a bill under consideration in the RI General Assembly that would impose an unfunded mandate on our homes to increase staffing to 4.1 hours. The bill is completely out of touch with the present situation in our homes. While we are holding our own with respect to good quality care, we are already struggling due to years of state Medicaid cuts, and in crisis due to a virulent pandemic. Please understand that this unfunded mandate would push many homes over the financial edge including ours, leaving our most frail RI elderly in crisis. We respectfully request that the General Assembly reject this legislation.

There is no need for this unreasonable mandate. RI nursing homes are ranked number two in the country for overall quality in the America's Health Rankings 2019 Senior Report, and listed as number one in the nation for infection control by the most recent report by the Government Accountability Office (GAO). (The Providence Journal, June 8, "RI Nursing Homes Among U.S Best.")

According to the federal agency that regulates nursing homes (CMS), RI nursing homes rank 11th in the country on staffing adequacy, which measures how well a nursing homes' staffing patterns match the needs of its residents.

In many states, nursing homes like those in RI and MA follow the CMS federal guidelines for staffing. No state in the U.S. has a 4.1 minimum. There are only two states in New England with minimum staffing hours; Vermont is at 3.0 and Connecticut at 1.9.

consistent cuts, in addition to issues with UHIP, have made our work incredibly difficult. More cuts from an unfunded mandate for staffing would decimate our homes.

Our homes are filled with thousands of staff members who work so hard not only to earn a living for themselves and their families, but also because they are caring individuals who get joy out of working to help people in their later, more frail stages of life. That said, our workers should be paid well to do their job, as just because you use your heart does not make this a volunteer opportunity—it is a job. The cuts to Medicaid year after year, have left them working at lower wages than they deserve. Medicaid must be fully funded for them to receive wages they need. In fact, 70 cents of every dollar of nursing home revenue goes to our workers.

RI's nursing homes are small businesses. We play an important role in our jobs and health care economy. We ask you to reject this bill. Our workers and our residents deserve it.

Sincerely,

MEd OTR/L

12 YRS. @ FRIENDLY