



**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT of HOUSE BILL No.7624  
RELATING TO THE HEALTH AND SAFETY OF NURSING HOME ACT**

**Memo To:** Chairman Abney and Members of the House Finance Committee  
**From:** Ditra Edwards  
**Date:** July 8, 2020

My name is Ditra Edwards, and I am the Director of SISTA Fire, a network of women of color in Rhode Island. SISTA Fire stands in full support of House Bill No.7624 introduced by Representatives Slater, Shekarchi, Williams, Bennett, Vella-Wilkinson, an act relating to the health and safety of nursing home staff.

Most nursing home staff are women of color. They have long faced multiple challenges in a field where they bring tremendous commitment and care for their patients but do not receive it from the industry in return. Instead, they are underpaid, underappreciated, frequently in pain due to the physical strain on their bodies and having to work multiple jobs because pay is so low. Many experience toxic stress due to juggling jobs, pain, bills, and supporting their families.

During this on-going crisis of Covid-19, we have seen these issues greatly exacerbated. Many frontline nursing home staff have had to make choices between the safety and care of their families and their patients. They are called "essential workers", but only their work is essential, while they are having to risk their lives to make ends meet. That kind of choice is unacceptable.

SISTA Fire stands in solidarity with all nursing home staff and in full support of House Bill No. 7624.