



May 1, 2024

Members of the House Finance Committee:

Thank you for allowing me to submit testimony in favor of bill H 7493.

I'm Richard Gamache, CEO of Aldersbridge Communities, a RI-based not-for-profit organization that provides affordable housing, Medicaid assisted living, skilled nursing and rehab, out-patient rehab, home, and community-based health navigator services and more, for low to moderate income older adults in Providence, East Providence, and Woonsocket.

I'm sorry I cannot be there in person to testify in favor of bill H 7493, which proposes a 20% add-on to the Medicaid per diem rate for nursing homes that have single-occupancy rooms.

According to the insurance industry, 2 out of every 5 people over the age of 65 will spend some time living in a nursing home. Most of us go through life assuming someone else will be unlucky, not us. But with 15 of you on the committee, it's a safe bet that at least 6 of you will end up in a nursing home at some point in your lives. I'm sure you agree that is a scary thought.

When it happens to you, I'm sure you won't mind sharing a room with a complete stranger. Your new roommate may or may not speak the same language as you. They may like to sleep with the window closed and you like it cracked open. They may turn the volume way up on the television because of a hearing issue. They may have a large, noisy family that visits almost every day. But you can always close the "privacy curtain" that separates your beds from each other.

The fact is, there's nothing private about living in a nursing home, unless you're paying privately for a private room, and you can afford \$10,000+ per month. Medicare does not cover it.



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*Aldersbridge Communities is a registered 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.*

*We are an equal opportunity provider of elder housing and healthcare.*



All of us are just one ischemic event away from needing 24-hour skilled care. At Linn Health and Rehabilitation, the award-winning nursing home that Aldersbridge operates in East Providence, we have residents who are in their forties, fifties, sixties, seventies, eighties, nineties and over a hundred. And like all nursing home residents, they live as if they're in a college dorm with roommates, even taking turns taking a shower at the end of the hall. Imagine what that's like.

Sharing rooms and bathrooms has been identified as one of the main causes of the spread of COVID in nursing homes. These buildings were never designed to mitigate the spread of deadly infections.

Every person who lives in a nursing home should be entitled to their own room, and this bill represents a step forward, into a more dignified, safe, and humane environment.

With the passage of H 7493, you will provide incentive for providers like me to convert shared rooms to private, which will cut down on costly hospitalizations, illnesses, and deaths.

Without the passage of this bill, providers like me cannot afford to convert rooms on our own, even though we know it is the right thing to do, because it costs us the same amount of money to provide electricity and heat to a shared room as it does to a single room. All we're asking for is enough reimbursement to cover our fixed costs.

Approximately three-fourths of all nursing home beds in RI are in shared rooms. This bill provides an opportunity for RI to set a higher standard of care and quality of life for our elders. It's a chance to do the right thing. We can be a model for the country. You have the power to make it happen. Please, we need to move forward, to make progress, to make life better for our elders.

Thank you.



Richard Gamache, CEO  
Aldersbridge Communities