



April 30, 2025

House Committee on Finance
Rhode Island State House
HouseFinance@rilegislature.gov

Re: **Testimony SUPPORTING HB 5466**, to increase the personal needs allowance for nursing home residents

Dear Chair Abney and Honorable Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony in support of House Bill 5466. ABC-RI stands for the rights and interests of all Rhode Islanders residing in long-term care facilities. Those relying on Medicaid are often the most vulnerable, and they are in the majority.

When visiting a Providence nursing facility recently, I was saddened to see that the prizes for the day's bingo were deodorant and shampoo. Residents in nursing facilities generally receive very limited, low quality, personal hygiene products, so deodorant or a preferred brand of shampoo are literally "prized."

These residents receive a monthly "personal needs allowance" of \$75, which nearly all residents find insufficient to meet their basic needs. If your cell phone service costs \$30 per month (there are generally no landlines in resident rooms) and you pay \$25 for a monthly haircut, that leaves you with \$20 for all of your other expenses. Food and care is all included in a nursing facility, but if you'd like a decent cup of coffee, fresh produce, or occasional take-out, that \$20 isn't going to cover it. If you want to visit family and need to take an Uber, you'll need to save up. And if you need new socks and underwear, let alone new shoes, you're going to have to rely on the generosity of others or go without. Streaming services, movies, magazines, and art/craft supplies are often out of reach for most. And many residents have told us how heartbreaking it is that they can't afford even small gifts for family and loved ones.

Rhode Islanders residing in nursing homes had no increase in their PNAs for decades, then received a modest increase in 2023, with the promise of a future increase to bring it to \$100/month. With the cost of living increasing ever faster, and **20 states at or above Rhode Island's current allowance (11 states at \$100-\$200)**, it's time to institute that increase. We respectfully urge you to grant our most vulnerable Rhode Islanders an allowance that can help them maintain a bit of dignity and independence. **No one should rely on winning at bingo to get the hygiene products they need.**

Thank you for your time and attention, and for all of your work on behalf of all Rhode Islanders.

Sincerely,

Kathleen Gerard,
ABC-RI