



May 5, 2026

TO: Chair Abney, Members of House Finance Committee

FROM: Carol Costa, SACRI Executive Director

Maureen Maignet, SACRI Policy Advisor

**RE: H7059**

SACRI strongly supports H7059 and thanks Representatives Slater and Diaz for introducing it. This bill calls for the addition of \$100,000 to the FY2027 Office of Healthy Aging budget to provide additional resources to the Alliance for Better Long Term Care to operate the Long Term Care Ombudsman Program (LTCOP.) The RI LTCOP plays a critical federal and state mandated role in protecting the rights, dignity, and well-being of persons residing in the state's 76 licensed nursing facilities (8,405 beds), 65 assisted living residences (5,209 units), residents of the Bristol Veterans Home and the Eleanor Slater Hospital. Established under the Older Americans Act, and RIGL42-66.7-12, the program serves as the only independent advocacy entity solely dedicated to these residents.

Despite its essential function, the program remains under- resourced relative to the scope and complexity of its responsibilities. At present, Rhode Island's program consists of one State Ombudsman and four staff Ombudsmen. From 2023 to 2025 the number of complaints to the LTCOP tripled – from 597 to 1797. In 2025, complaints related to serious issues such as abuse, gross neglect and exploitation comprised 30% of complaints, 22% related to inadequate care and 21% to infringements of rights.

RI Department of Health surveys showed a disturbing increase in serious deficiencies (referred to as Immediate Jeopardy) in nursing home care in the last several years and 25 citations for such serious deficiencies in assisted living in 2025. Recent research shows a positive correlation between increased funding for the LTCOPs and improved nursing home quality.<sup>1</sup>

Current LTCOP staffing level is insufficient to meet the growing demand for services. Nor, does it meet national standards for ombudsman programs as recommended by the Institute of Medicine. Without additional funding, the program is challenged to maintain, let alone expand, its level of service. Increased funding would allow for the hiring and training of additional Ombudsman staff, enabling more frequent facility visits, improved response times, and enhanced resident advocacy. It would also support outreach, education and advocacy efforts to ensure residents and families are aware of their rights and the resources available to them.

Investing in the Long Term Care Ombudsman Program is an investment in promoting accountability and quality care for some of Rhode Island's most vulnerable residents and to ensure all residents have access to a strong, independent voice advocating on their behalf.

<sup>1</sup>Milbank Quarterly, Oct. 2025