

May 2, 2026

**Re: Support for H.R. 7059**

Dear Chair Abney and Honorable Members of the Committee,

My name is Emilia DaSilva-Tavarez, and I am writing in strong support of H.R. 7059, which proposes an appropriation of \$100,000 to the Rhode Island Office of Healthy Aging for the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program.

The state appropriation for the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program has not been increased in well over a decade. This lack of funding places a significant burden on families like mine who rely on this program to advocate for our loved ones in long-term care.

Both of my parents required long-term care over a three-year period, and my mother passed most recently. Throughout that time, the Ombudsman Program was instrumental in helping me advocate on their behalf. Without their guidance, support, and persistence, many critical issues would not have been resolved as effectively.

One particularly important issue involved installing a camera in my mother's room to ensure her safety, as there were concerns about the quality of care she was receiving. Although legislation allowing this passed in 2025, the process of actually getting the camera installed took months—until late February into March—and required extensive coordination.

The Ombudsman worked tirelessly alongside me and the facility to navigate delays, conflicting information, and unnecessary barriers. At one point, the facility even shut down internet access on my mother's floor for a week while restructuring Wi-Fi access and implementing new charges. My Ombudsman representative had to remain in constant communication with both the facility and myself, advocating "tooth and nail" to move the process forward. Despite these challenges, we persisted and ultimately succeeded.

However, this experience made one thing very clear: when a program is underfunded and understaffed, even the most dedicated advocates are stretched thin. Families should not have to fight this hard to ensure the safety and dignity of their loved ones.

The elderly population in Rhode Island depends on the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program. Adequate funding is essential to ensure it can operate efficiently, respond promptly, and continue providing critical advocacy services to those who need it most.

I respectfully urge you to support H.R. 7059 and invest in protecting our most vulnerable residents.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,  
Emilia DaSilva-Tavarez