

May 5, 2026

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

Re: Testimony supporting HR 7059, appropriating \$100,000 to the RI Office Of Healthy Aging for the RI Long-Term Care Ombudsman program

Dear Chair Abney and Honorable Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony in strong support of HR 7059

We write on behalf of the resident council that we lead at Halcyon West Bay assisted living. We wouldn't have a resident council without the Ombudsman Program. We didn't know what a resident council was. We didn't even know what the word meant. The ombudsmen came here and talked to us about it. They told us about our rights. When we decided to organize a group of residents, the ombudsman offered to help and gave us all the paperwork. The resident council is very strong now thanks to the support from the ombudsman. They are always available when we have questions.

People would still be on the floor without the council, because 75% of the emergency pendants weren't working, but the resident council got the administrators to fix them. One woman was on the floor for 3 hours with a broken arm, another for 4 hours, she kept ringing the pendant and no one came.

Personal care, showers, and laundry are all better because of the council and the ombudsman. We weren't going to church. Since the pandemic we just had church on tv. Then we got a deacon and a priest to come alternating weeks. We get to go to church every week now, and we have a prayer group, too, thanks to the council.

We were understaffed. We told the owner. He said "that's not your concern." We told the administrator, and she said "that's not your business," but the ombudsman helped us. When the residents complained at the town hall the administrator said "if you're not happy here you can always go live somewhere else, we can help you find another place." The administrator said "I want you to stop helping people." I said, "but they come and tell me their problems." "Well then cover your ears," she said. I said no, and we formed the council, and now the residents are happier and we have a way to solve problems together. We have 75 residents, and we get 45-55 residents at every monthly meeting. No one was coming to the town hall meetings anymore, so they stopped having them. The administrators come to our council meeting once every quarter.

We invite the ombudsman to our meetings, and she comes and answers the questions and resident concerns that we can't answer.

The administrators told one of our members he was going to be evicted, because of a misunderstanding, and he was saved by the Ombudsman Program. They told him his rights, and they talked to the administrators and helped them understand. He has been able to stay in his home, and everything is better now.

Please give the Long Term Care Ombudsman Program the funding they need, so that they can keep helping residents like us. We couldn't have made these improvements without them.

Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

Maryellen Kline, Wayne Garland, and Jacquelyn Larson,  
for the Halcyon West Bay Resident Council