March 4, 2021

Dear Chairman Abney and Members of the House Finance Committee,

Please support the Nursing Home Safe Staffing and Quality Care Act (H5012 Rep. Slater)

My name is Nicole Jean-Giles and I live in Providence. I've been an RN for over 30 years and have been working in nursing homes in Rhode Island since 1985.

When I first started working in nursing homes, the job was a lot different, a lot easier. There used to be a lot less paperwork to do, but more than that, the residents were much easier back then. We used to provide care for the elderly who might need a little help. They wanted to sit and talk, and we had time to do that.

Now our residents are younger, sicker, and more demanding. For example, we have a lot more multiple-diagnoses, mental illness, diabetes, hypertension, substance addiction, dementia, Alzheimer's. We have residents in their 20s with mental illness. These residents are much more demanding. They require more care and just more time to care for them. It's a totally different type of nursing.

But while the patients need more out of us, they get less. That's because at lots of nursing homes in Rhode Island, we have less staff than we used to. When I started working at one nursing home, we used to have 6 CNAs on the floor. Now we have 5 on a good day, sometimes just 4. That means the residents have to wait. A lot of them don't understand it, and I get that. If it was me and I was sick and needed help, I would want it now. But I can't be in two places at once. They get very frustrated. They need the help now, they don't want to wait.

Not all nursing homes are the same. I work for a nursing home owned by a big, out of state company. I also work at a non-profit run by the United Methodist Church. At the for-profit nursing home, each CNA has 11 residents from 7-3. At the non-profit, each CNA has 8 residents. Even 8 residents each can be a lot when you have multiple call lights going off, but at least you have more staff on the floor to help.

The residents at the for-profit deserve the same as the residents at the non-profit. But they don't get it. Just because they happen to live in a nursing home run by a greedy company, paid by our tax dollars, that puts profit over patient care. That's why we need the General Assembly to pass the Nursing Home Safe Staffing and Quality Care Act. We spend our tax dollars to provide nursing care to nursing home residents. We need the state to Raise the Bar so every resident in Rhode Island gets the care they need, whatever nursing home they live in.

Nicole Jean-Gilles, RN
Providence