



Dear Chairwoman Donovan and Esteemed Committee Members,

I hope this letter finds you well, amidst the hustle and bustle of legislative deliberations. My name is Gabrielle Sechio, and I am honored to serve as the Administrator of Heritage Hills Rehabilitation and Healthcare Center in the quaint town of Smithfield, Rhode Island. Here at Heritage Hills, we're not just a nursing home; we're a tightly-knit family dedicated to the care and comfort of our 100 residents, while providing meaningful employment opportunities to 150 valued Rhode Islanders.

Yet, behind the warm smiles and compassionate care lies a stark reality. Rhode Island nursing homes, including ours, are grappling with formidable challenges that threaten our very existence. Chronic underfunding by Medicaid over the past decade, exacerbated by the historic labor crisis ignited by the COVID-19 pandemic and the relentless march of inflation, has left our industry teetering on the brink. Recent studies paint a sobering picture, revealing that a staggering 87% of Rhode Island nursing homes are perilously close to closure, facing operating losses of 7.5% or more.

As we stand on the precipice, legislative proposals loom ominously, casting shadows of uncertainty over our future. I humbly submit our position on the following bills:

House Bill 7520: Support

House Bill 7733: Oppose

House Bill 7819: Oppose

House Bill No. 7520, aptly titled "An Act Relating to Health and Safety - Rights of Nursing Home Patients," embodies our unwavering support. In a landscape marred by workforce shortages, this bill offers a glimmer of hope. It recognizes the challenges faced by nursing homes like ours, burdened by the weight of staffing mandates amid a labor crisis. By repealing the Nursing Home Minimum Staffing Law, this bill acknowledges the complexities of our industry and paves the way for tailored solutions that prioritize resident care.



Conversely, House Bill No. 7733, which seeks to establish a Nursing Home Workforce Standards Board, meets our opposition. While we embrace regulations that uphold the highest standards of care, the prospect of an ad-hoc committee wielding regulatory power raises concerns. Such a board, divorced from existing state and federal oversight, risks exacerbating the very issues it seeks to address, further imperiling the vulnerable populations we serve.

Similarly, House Bill No. 7819, aimed at restricting equity withdrawal and asset transfer in nursing homes, faces our resolute opposition. By imposing stringent limitations on facility transactions, this bill threatens to stifle innovation and investment, jeopardizing the quality of care we provide to our residents. In an industry where every dollar is stretched to its limit, such restrictions only serve to exacerbate our financial woes, potentially driving quality operators out of Rhode Island and leaving our elders without the care they deserve.

In closing, I extend my deepest gratitude for your time and consideration. As stewards of our state's healthcare landscape, your decisions hold the power to shape the future of our industry and the lives of countless Rhode Islanders. Together, let us navigate these turbulent waters with wisdom and compassion, ensuring that our nursing homes remain beacons of hope and healing for generations to come.

Warm regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Gabrielle Sechio', written over a horizontal line.

Gabrielle Sechio

Administrator

Heritage Hills Rehabilitation and Healthcare Center