



**House Committee on Health and Human Services
March 26th 2024
H 7969**

Statement by James Nyberg, Executive Director

On behalf of the nursing homes and assisted living residences we represent, LeadingAge RI would like to express our appreciation to the sponsors of this legislation for their interest in protecting the health and safety of our residents. Indeed, that has been the mission and focus of our providers for decades. We are concerned, however, about the legislation that is being proposed because of privacy issues and because it runs counterintuitive to our decades-long concerted effort to implement resident-centered care, ensure dignity in the care setting, and create a home-like environment.

Currently, we follow several established policies and procedures at both state and federal levels that are intended to promote resident safety. Those mandates require anyone who may be suspicious of elder abuse or neglect to report their findings to the Health Department, police departments, and the Long Term Care Ombudsman Agency. Nursing homes and assisted living residences are also regularly visited by the Health Department, the Ombudsman, and others to observe the care being provided to residents and to promote residents' well-being.

As you know, this bill would authorize the use of electronic monitoring cameras in resident rooms. Our opposition to the proposed legislation is both practical - involving resident rights, dignity, and privacy, and logistical concerns - and philosophical. On the practical side, we note that most rooms in nursing homes here in Rhode Island (at present) are semi-private. So if one resident opts-out of the surveillance, it would be almost impossible to respect the privacy and intentions of both residents.

We also question the logistics of moving a resident when another one objects to the surveillance. It could be difficult if not impossible to accommodate, given the layout of nursing homes, residents rights, and the desire to limit the moving around of residents to new units or wings. We try to keep them comfortable in their living space as much as possible. This would add another level of logistical complexity.

Lastly, we have philosophic concerns about this legislation. Our providers have made serious investments in their buildings and their staff over the past decade to adopt resident-centered care policies in an effort to adopt a home-like environment. The installation of video cameras to monitor

every move residents make would seriously disrupt these efforts, add a 'big brother' feeling to our nursing homes or assisted living residences and return us to an era of institutionalized care. Cameras in resident rooms would be an intrusion of the privacy and dignity of the people we serve.

Like you, we want to keep our loved ones safe from harm. We want them to be cared for by a familiar, loving face each day. The staff in our member organizations are committed to the health and well-being of residents, as evidenced by their dedication during the COVID pandemic. Instead of using video surveillance to catch them making a misstep, wouldn't it make more sense to be proactive and continue to invest in adequate oversight, staffing levels, and education to prevent neglect or abuse from ever happening?

Thank you for your consideration.