



February 22, 2025

Testimony of Lori Light, Rhode Island State Long-Term Care Ombudsman
House Committee on Health and Human Services

Re: SUPPORTING H.B. 5303 – The Healthcare Professional Complaint History Transparency Act

Dear Chair Donovan and Honorable Members of the Committee,

I appreciate the opportunity to submit testimony today, and I regret that I am unable to be there in person. As the Rhode Island State Long Term Care Ombudsman, my office is dedicated to advocating for the health, safety, and rights of residents in long-term care facilities.

In just the last three months, my office has received 81 reports of physical abuse and 25 reports of sexual abuse against residents in long-term care facilities across Rhode Island. While some allegations may ultimately be unsubstantiated, we also know that abuse in these settings is highly underreported. Our office maintains a database tracking allegations against staff, and when patterns emerge—when multiple complaints follow the same individual across multiple facilities—we must ask at what point we can no longer consider it a coincidence.

Consider the case of a nurse arrested for sexually assaulting a resident. It took 21 complaints—spanning physical, sexual, and verbal abuse—over 18 years before a complaint was finally substantiated and action was taken. Another staff member has been the subject of 13 complaints across nine facilities over eight years, yet regulators have not determined sufficient evidence to substantiate any single complaint. And then there is the staff member with seven sexual abuse allegations across five different facilities over nine years. Their license was suspended after the most recent complaint—only to be reinstated approximately six months later.

By passing H.B. 5303, the **Healthcare Professional Complaint History Transparency Act**, we can equip long-term care facilities with the necessary tools to make informed hiring decisions. No administrator in Rhode Island would knowingly hire individuals with such alarming histories if this information were readily accessible. Our elders—many of whom are entirely dependent on their caregivers—deserve the same vigilance and protection as our children.

I urge you to support H.B. 5303 to ensure transparency, accountability, and most importantly, the safety of our most vulnerable citizens.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Lori Light
Rhode Island State Long-Term Care Ombudsman

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