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Testimony in Support of H-5170 – Nursing Home Family Councils and Anti-Discrimination Protections

Chair Donovan and Honorable Members of the Health & Human Services Committee,

On behalf of SEIU 1199 New England, representing more than 1,000 frontline nursing home workers across Rhode Island, we write in strong support of H-5170. This bill is an important step toward improving transparency, fairness, and resident-centered care in our state's nursing homes.

H-5170 does two things that are both necessary and long overdue. First, it recognizes and supports the establishment of **independent family councils** within nursing facilities—giving families a stronger voice in the care and well-being of their loved ones. Family councils provide essential oversight and advocacy, and facilities should not only allow them but collaborate with them.

Second, this bill addresses **discrimination against Medicaid recipients** in nursing home admissions. Far too often, facilities prioritize private-pay residents while sidelining those who rely on Medicaid. H-5170 would require transparency in waiting list processes and ensure that in facilities where more than 30% of residents are self-pay, admissions to non-private rooms are made on a **first-come, first-served basis**.

This approach reinforces the principle that **every resident deserves equal access to care, regardless of how they pay**, and helps protect against the quiet segregation of lower-income older adults.

We urge the committee to support H-5170 and take meaningful action to improve equity, transparency, and family engagement in nursing homes.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Alex Moore
Political Director, SEIU 1199NE