



To: House Health & Human Services Committee  
From: Karen Malcolm, Protect Our Healthcare Coalition, [ProtectRIHealth@gmail.com](mailto:ProtectRIHealth@gmail.com)  
Date: March 27, 2025  
Re: **SUPPORT H5169 and H5170** – Assisted Living Resident Empowerment & Nursing Home Family Councils

The Protect Our Healthcare Coalition is a group of leading Rhode Island non-profits and consumer groups with a shared mission to protect, improve, and expand equitable access to quality, person-centered, affordable health care for all. The Coalition strongly **supports House Bills 5169 and 5170** the Assisted Living Resident Empowerment Act and Nursing Home Family Council Support bill.

Thousands of Rhode Islanders call assisted living and nursing facilities ‘home’. And yet, too many lack the means to have a say in how their ‘homes’ are managed. Resident/family councils in these facilities help **empower residents by providing a platform to voice concerns, participate in decision-making, and advocate for their needs, ultimately improving the quality of life and care within the community.** While facility administrators say that they support family and resident councils, in practice residents are often discouraged in the formation of independent councils for the same reason that many landlords discourage the formation of tenant unions. A group can advocate more powerfully than an individual.

Given the rates of serious deficiencies in both assisted living and nursing homes here in Rhode Island, and the rapid increase in costs at these facilities -- regularly in excess of the inflation rate -- residents must be provided more information and opportunity to join together to ensure their financial investment(s) (and those of the state) are reflected in their quality of life and well-being.

In a recent article published by [Justice in Aging](https://justiceinaging.org), they note that a contributing factor to the ability of nursing homes to implement ‘unlawful’ practices is the “*unwillingness of residents and family members to complain, due to shyness and a fear that a nursing home will retaliate. Together, this lack of knowledge (about federal and state laws), shyness, and fear of retaliation allow some nursing homes to develop and follow unlawful procedures.*”<sup>1</sup> Implementation of these two bills would help ameliorate this factor.

In addition to support of resident/family councils, House Bill 5169 would also require 120 days notice for fee/rate increases (in line with rent increase notice for residential tenants over 65) and the disclosure of 3 years of historical rate increases in the residency agreement.

We urge the Committee’s support of both House Bills 5169 and 5170.

Thank you.

**Protect Our Healthcare Coalition partners include:** Economic Progress Institute, RIPIN, Mental Health Association RI, RI Health Center Association, Latino Policy Institute, Central Providence Opportunities: A Health Equity Zone (CPO-HEZ), United Way of Rhode Island, Senior Agenda Coalition RI, RI Medical Society, Planned Parenthood of Southern New England, SEIU Rhode Island Council, American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network, Leukemia/Lymphoma Society, RI Coalition for the Homeless, Rhode Island Working Families Party, Mental Health Recovery Coalition, RI Community Food Bank, RI Psychological Association, Substance Use & Mental Health Leadership Council, Rhode Island Coalition for Children and Families, HousingWorks RI, Rhode Island Organizing Project (RIOP), National Association of Social Workers RI Chapter, The Womxn Project, Advocates for Better Care

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<sup>1</sup> <https://justiceinaging.org/25-common-nursing-home-problems/>