



March 24, 2025

House Committee on Health and Human Services
Rhode Island State House
Househealthandhumanservices@rilegislature.gov

RE: Testimony in Support of HB 5170: Supporting Family Councils in Nursing Homes

Dear Chair Donovan and Members of the Committee,

As the Rhode Island State Long Term Care Ombudsman, my office is keenly aware of the significant differences in satisfaction among families and residents when a nursing home **supports and embraces family councils**. Facilities that encourage these councils foster **stronger communication, improved care, and greater trust** between staff and families.

The decision to place a parent, spouse, sibling, or loved one in a nursing home is never easy. Long-term care is a complicated and often overwhelming system. By the time a family reaches the point where nursing home care is necessary, they are already exhausted and emotionally drained from navigating the process. Family councils provide a **vital source of support, education, and advocacy** for these families.

Too often, families feel **isolated**, as if they are the only ones experiencing a difficult situation. Family councils change that. They bring people together, offering **both emotional support and a unified voice** to advocate for quality care. We have seen families **step in to support other residents**, watching over them when their own loved ones are away. This is particularly comforting for families of residents with dementia, knowing that someone is looking out for their loved one.

There is power in families coming together to support one another and resolve problems collectively. I urge you to support **HB 5170** to ensure that families in Rhode Island nursing homes have a stronger voice and a seat at the table in advocating for their loved ones.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Lori Light
Rhode Island State Long-Term Care Ombudsman

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