



March 27, 2025

The Honorable Susan Donovan
Chairwoman
House Health & Human Services Committee
Rhode Island State House
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

RE: H5527 Nursing Home Workforce Standards Board - OPPOSED

Dear Chairwoman Donovan and Members of the Health & Human Services Committee,

On behalf of LeadingAge Rhode Island and the nonprofit nursing homes we represent, I am writing to express our strong opposition to H5257, the proposed Nursing Home Workforce Standards Board Act. While we fully support efforts to strengthen Rhode Island's long-term care system and ensure high-quality care for residents, this bill will have significant unintended consequences that will further destabilize our sector during a time of unprecedented financial and workforce challenges.

Nonprofit nursing homes in Rhode Island are already facing extraordinary pressures due to Medicaid reimbursement rates that fail to cover the actual cost of care, an unprecedented workforce shortage that threatens access to services, and the looming uncertainty posed by Congress's potential historic cuts to Medicaid. In this environment, additional regulatory mandates and wage-setting mechanisms will only exacerbate these challenges, making it even more difficult for providers to recruit and retain staff, ensure financial sustainability, and continue delivering the quality care that Rhode Island's older adults deserve.

Specifically, H5257 would establish an advisory board with broad powers to recommend minimum statewide compensation and working standards for nursing home workers. While we recognize the importance of fair wages and benefits, this approach does not address the root cause of the issue—chronic underfunding of Medicaid. Without a corresponding increase in Medicaid reimbursement rates, mandated increases in compensation would force many nonprofit nursing homes to reduce services, limit admissions, or, in some cases, face closure altogether.

Additionally, the bill fails to acknowledge the diverse financial realities of Rhode Island's nursing homes. One-size-fits-all mandates disregard the unique challenges faced by nonprofit providers, which often operate on thin margins while serving a high percentage of Medicaid beneficiaries.



The proposed advisory board structure also does not adequately include representation from providers who understand these operational challenges firsthand.

We urge the General Assembly to take a more balanced approach that prioritizes sustainable, long-term solutions to support Rhode Island's nonprofit nursing homes. This includes addressing Medicaid underfunding, investing in workforce recruitment and retention initiatives, and ensuring that any policy changes reflect the financial realities of providers.

Thank you for your time and consideration of our concerns. We welcome the opportunity to work collaboratively on policies that enhance nursing home care without imposing additional burdens that jeopardize the viability of nonprofit providers. Please do not hesitate to reach out if you would like to discuss this matter further.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "F. McMahon", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Francis X. McMahon, Esq.
LeadingAge Rhode Island