



ALLIANCE FOR BETTER LONG TERM CARE, INC.

February 11, 2026

Rhode Island House of Representatives

RE: Testimony SUPPORTING House Bill 7488, AN ACT RELATING TO HEALTH AND SAFETY - ABUSE IN HEALTHCARE FACILITIES

Dear Chair McEntee and Honorable Committee Members,

My name is Keri Salinger, and I am the Executive Director of the Alliance for Better Long Term Care, a Rhode Island - based nonprofit organization focused on advocacy, education, and support for individuals receiving long-term care services. Our work is grounded in promoting dignity, safety, and accountability across long-term care settings, with a strong emphasis on strengthening systems and preventing harm. The Alliance also serves as the nonprofit organization that houses Rhode Island's State Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program.

From this organizational perspective, we support H7488 because it addresses a significant gap in current law. Requiring proof of "intent" or "willfulness" in order to establish abuse or neglect creates a barrier to accountability that does not reflect how harm most often occurs in healthcare and long-term care settings. In practice, serious neglect and mistreatment frequently result from systemic failures - such as inadequate staffing, insufficient oversight, or breakdowns in care processes - rather than deliberate acts by individual caregivers. Yet the impact on residents is no less real or harmful.

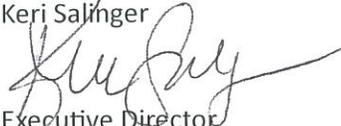
When residents are harmed, the absence of intent does not lessen the seriousness of the outcome or the responsibility to respond.

Importantly, removing the intent requirement does not eliminate professional judgment, common sense, or due process. This bill does not criminalize good-faith caregiving, nor does it require that every error, oversight, or resident-to-resident incident be treated as abuse or neglect. Capacity assessments, clinical discretion, and existing regulatory and investigative guidance will continue to play a critical role in how incidents are evaluated and addressed.

What H7488 does do is ensure that harm to residents cannot be dismissed simply because intent is difficult to prove. It shifts the focus appropriately toward resident safety, accountability, and prevention, while reinforcing the responsibility of facilities and systems to maintain practices that reduce foreseeable harm and respond appropriately when it occurs.

As an organization committed to improving long-term care through collaboration, education, and advocacy, we believe H7488 strikes a reasonable and necessary balance. It strengthens protections for vulnerable Rhode Islanders while supporting a more realistic and effective framework for addressing abuse and neglect in healthcare facilities.

For these reasons, the Alliance for Better Long Term Care respectfully urges passage of House Bill 7488. Thank you for your consideration and for your continued commitment to protecting individuals receiving care in healthcare facilities across Rhode Island.

Keri Salinger

Executive Director

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