

Steven Sepe

From: SageFC@gmail <sagefootcare@gmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, February 8, 2026 5:33 PM
To: House Health and Human Services Committee
Cc: Rep. Boylan, Jennifer; Sage Foot Care
Subject: Support for H7029

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TO: Chair Donovan and members of the House Human Health Services Committee Email:HouseHealthandHumanServices@rilegislature.gov
CC: Representative Jennifer Boylan - State of Rhode Island General Assembly

FROM: Debbie Fleming, BScN, RN, CFCS, CFCN

RE: Support for H7029

DATE: 2026 February 8

Chair Donovan and honorable members of the House Health and Human Services Committee:

My name is Debbie Fleming, and I live in St. Albert, Alberta. In addition to providing in-home foot care to clients, I am also an advisor, researcher and educator for the American Foot Care Nurses Association.

I am writing to urge you to support H7029 (Representative Jennifer Boylan), which would permit a nurse who has the appropriate knowledge and clinical competency to provide routine home foot care services.

Rhode Islanders deserve access to safe, routine foot care in the home. Aging in place often requires family caregivers to step in and provide personal care for loved ones, including routine foot care. Family members often lack the skills, knowledge, and confidence to safely provide this care. The Rhode Island Office of Healthy Aging states:

"Rhode Island is growing older. We are among the states with the highest share of adults age 85 and over....where you live and your access to resources have a very real effect on your health and quality of life." <https://healthyagingdatareports.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/RI-Healthy-Aging-Report-2020.pdf#:~:text=Rhode%20Island's%20older%20population%20is%20growing%20dramatically.,increase%20of%20nearly%2075%25%20over%2030%20years.>

"By 2030, it is estimated that one in four Rhode Islanders will be 65 or older, while adults living with disabilities in Rhode Island account for 13 percent of the total state population..."

<https://oha.ri.gov/who-we-are/key-facts>

According to the 2023 US Census, there were 212,000 Rhode Island citizens aged 65 or older, which is almost 20% of the population! (https://data.census.gov/profile/Rhode_Island?g=040XX00US44#populations-and-people) As of August 6, 2022, according to data from the Rhode Island Board of Examiners, there were 101 licensed podiatrists, a ratio of 1 per 10,865 people (<https://podipaedia.org/wiki/podiatry-practice/podiatry-worldwide/united-states/number-of-podiatrists-in-the-usa/>). Even assuming all

licensed Rhode Island podiatrists are in full-time clinical practice, there are still too few podiatrists that to manage this growing senior population, in addition to managing sports injuries and other health emergencies among younger populations. Accessibility for those in need of routine foot care service is key to early assessment, preventive education, and care, particularly for mobility-challenged, homebound citizens.

At last year's hearing on this topic, Bill 6088, it is noteworthy that the podiatrists testifying stated they were unable to attend housebound individuals in their homes unless they had already been seen in a clinic, as insurance payment would not be assured. Sadly, many homebound clients in need were not attended to in-home. It may be their condition was not investigated. There is a clear gap between the number of available health professionals able to provide foot care and Rhode Island's population of seniors, many of whom need foot care. In-home care is where most foot care nurses practise in other states, as an adjunct to clinical podiatric care, and these nurses are not dependent on clients' insurance.

Foot care nurses providing in-home care across the country provide routine preventive care. There are times when nurses encounter first-time clients who are home-bound and in urgent need of care beyond the nurse's scope. As health professionals, they have been trained to assess and identify such cases and refer clients to appropriate higher levels of expertise in a timely manner, thereby saving limbs.

Passing this bill and allowing nurses to fill this gap is the humane thing to do to promote the health and wellness of the most vulnerable in our state. Residents and their caregivers in RI deserve access to these services. Rhode Island is the only state in the country preventing trained nurses from providing this care.

A nearly identical bill passed in the House unanimously in 2025. Please pass this bill out of committee and to the House floor with a recommendation for passage to enable housebound people in urgent need of foot care to access much-needed professional foot care nursing.

Sincerely,

Debbie Fleming BScN, RN, CFCS (AFCNA-US), CFCN (WOCNCB-US)

AFCNA Advisory Board Member, Educator, Researcher & Volunteer

Member CAMDR - Canadian Association Of Medical Device Reprocessors

Member IPAC - Infection Prevention and Control Canada

