

H. Philip West Jr.

Support 26-H 7928

March 19, 2026

The Honorable Susan R. Donovan, Chair
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Thank you, Chair Donovan and members of the House Committee on Health and Human Services for considering 26-H 7928.

My name is H. Philip West Jr. Age is slowing me down, and I've stopped serving as volunteer lobbyist for the Village Common of Rhode Island. I submit this testimony only as a private citizen, but I assure you the Village Common and other nonprofits that work with older adults strongly support 26-H 7928.

Chair Donovan's legislation seeks to bridge the chasm that often separates administrators of assisted living facilities from both their residents and their residents' family members. It would:

- (1) Define "family council" as a body capable of fostering communication between administrators and both residents and their families and friends,
- (2) Define "resident council" in similar terms,
- (3) Require assisted living facilities to "allow for and support" for both resident and family councils, particularly in providing information and meeting space,
- (4) Specify detailed procedures for creating both resident councils and family councils,
- (5) Make clear that staff and visitors attend family and resident council meetings only at the council's invitation, and
- (6) Require 120-day disclosure of increasing fees,
- (7) Require the assisted living facility to respond within thirty (30) business days to communications from the family or resident council.

Nearly half of assisted living residents have been diagnosed with various dementias. Few of these residents can effectively advocate for themselves individually, but resident and family councils can speak for them. In my experience, many administrators of assisted living facilities welcome communications from residents' family and friends.

Others resist or seek to limit advocacy. I recently lost a close friend in another state who suffered dementia. The administration of the institution where he spent his final years had been receptive to insights about his needs from his wife and others of us who cherished him. But a new administrator shut the door on most communication. There was no family council.

Federal law guarantees nursing home residents the right to form resident and family councils, and it requires facilities to support those councils with space, staff, and timely responses. Because assisted living facilities are not subject to federal oversight, the Rhode Island must establish a reasonable process for patient advocacy.

I hope that this legislation will strengthen advocacy for nursing home and assisted living patients. Passage of 26-H 7928 will improve the quality of life for residents and lessen stress for their loved ones. I urge the Committee on Health and Human Services to recommend this important bill for passage by the full House.

Respectfully,



H. Philip West Jr.