

Written Testimony in Support of HB 7929 and HB 7927

Submitted by: Alice Msumba

Resident and Caregiver, State of Rhode Island

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Dear Chair Donovan and Honorable Committee Members,

My name is Alice Msumba and I am a long-term care advocate and caregiver for older adults here in Rhode Island. I am writing in strong support of **HB 7929** and **HB 7927**, two bills that address long-standing inequities and financial burdens placed on residents of assisted living and nursing home facilities—and on the families who love them.

These bills are not just policy proposals, they speak to the lived experiences of thousands of Rhode Islanders who are aging on fixed incomes, navigating complex care systems, or grieving the loss of a loved one. I have seen how policies can create unnecessary hardship at the very moments when families are most vulnerable.

Support for HB 7929

Under current practice, most long-term care facilities in Rhode Island continue charging rent and fees for **30 days after a resident's death**, regardless of whether services are being provided. These charges are non-negotiable, embedded in admission agreements, and often come as a shock to grieving families who are already overwhelmed.

For families living paycheck to paycheck, or for older adults whose estates consist of little more than a checking account and a few personal belongings, a month of additional charges can be devastating. It is not uncommon for families to receive bills totaling thousands of dollars—at the exact moment they are planning a funeral, settling affairs, and processing profound loss.

This practice is not about operational necessity. It is about an imbalance of power. Facilities are able to rent the same room to a new resident while still charging the deceased resident's estate. In effect, Rhode Island law allows double-billing, a practice that is both ethically troubling and financially punitive.

Other states, including Connecticut and New Hampshire, have already recognized the unfairness of this system and capped posthumous billing. Their long-term care industries have not collapsed. Rhode Island should not lag behind when the solution is simple, reasonable, and humane.

Reducing the posthumous billing window to **7 days or until belongings are removed** is a fair compromise. It respects the operational needs of facilities while preventing families from being financially penalized for a death.

Support for HB 7927

Rhode Island already permits residents to use electronic monitoring devices in long-term care settings. But the current requirement—that residents purchase their own private internet service—creates a two-tiered system where only families with financial means can exercise this right.

Private internet contracts are expensive, especially for older adults living on Social Security or limited retirement income. Many families simply cannot afford an additional monthly bill on top of room, board, and care costs. As a result, the right to monitor a loved one's care becomes a privilege reserved for those with disposable income.

This is an equity issue, plain and simple.

Most facilities already provide Wi-Fi to staff, visitors, and residents at no additional cost. Allowing residents to connect approved monitoring devices does not meaningfully strain bandwidth, nor does it impose a financial burden on facilities.

Electronic monitoring offers peace of mind, deters neglect, and strengthens trust between families and care providers. HB 7927 ensures that all residents that choose to have an electronic monitoring device can benefit from this important protection.

I respectfully urge the Committee to pass these bills and take an important step toward fairness, transparency, and dignity in Rhode Island's long-term care system.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Alice Msumba

Providence, Rhode Island