



April 28, 2026

Senate Committee on Health and Human Services
Rhode Island State House
slegislation@rilegislature.gov

Re: **Testimony regarding SB 2571**, to require annual inspections of assisted living facilities with special dementia care units.

Dear Chair Murray and Honorable Committee Members,

ABC-RI advocates for the rights and interests of all Rhode Islanders residing in long-term care facilities. We strongly support SB 2571 because **biennial inspections of assisted living residences have proven insufficient to keep residents safe and hold facilities accountable.**

Until 2017, all assisted living facilities in Rhode Island were inspected annually. SB 2571 would simply restore that standard for facilities with Special Dementia Care Units. **The average acuity of assisted living residents has increased dramatically**, and operators themselves describe today's assisted living as closer to yesterday's skilled nursing facility ([Senior Housing News, 4/16/25](#)). Preventable deaths and hospitalizations in RI's assisted living residences are too common, and when residents are not cognitively able to advocate for themselves, we cannot rely on them to raise the alarm themselves. **These residents are receiving more complex care under less oversight than before.**

- A peer-reviewed 2021 study found that the proportion of assisted living residents with high care needs increased 18% between 2007 and 2017 — more than double the rate of increase seen in nursing homes over the same period. ([Innovation in Aging, 12/17/21](#))
- According to CDC's 2022 National Post-acute and Long-term Care Study, 44% of assisted living and residents have been diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease or other dementias. ([NCHS Data Brief, 8/24](#))
- The average assisted living resident lives with more than 14 chronic conditions, such as asthma, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and diabetes, according to a recent analysis from NORC at the University of Chicago. ([Senior Housing News, 9/14/22](#))
- The 10 most frequently observed chronic conditions among assisted living residents were high blood pressure (58%), Alzheimer disease or other dementias (44%), heart disease (33%), depression (26%), arthritis (18%), chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (chronic bronchitis or emphysema) (16%), diabetes (16%), osteoporosis (12%), stroke (7%), and cancer (6%) ([NCHS Data Brief, 8/24](#))
- Since 2009, the average age for someone entering senior living has risen from 78 to 87. ([AHCA/NCAL](#))
- Among assisted living residents, 75% needed assistance with bathing, 71% needed assistance with walking, and 62% needed assistance with three or more activities of daily living. ([NCHS Data Brief, 8/24](#))

[Rhode Island Department of Health data shows 24 "immediate jeopardy" level violations](#) cited in assisted living residences in 2025, reflecting conditions that pose immediate risk of serious harm or death. **Yet Rhode Island does not fine assisted living facilities for any violation, regardless of severity.** When asked about the state's response to repeated severe violations resulting in actual resident harm, RIDOH spokesperson Joseph Wendelken stated: "Our approach to facilities' continued non-compliance is often to issue a compliance order or consent agreement. This often involves obtaining a clinical consultant and freeze admissions." In practice, there were no compliance orders or consent agreements in 2024, and only one in 2025. **This enforcement system is not functioning as a deterrent, so regular oversight must be restored.**

SB 2571 corrects a mistake that was made to cut costs on the backs of one of our most vulnerable populations, and we urge your support.

Thank you for your time and attention, and for all of your work on behalf of Rhode Islanders.

Sincerely,
Kathleen Gerard, ABC-RI

📄 assisted living inspection frequency by state New England/Mid-Atlantic

State	Inspection Frequency
New Hampshire	Annual
Delaware	Annual
Maryland	Annual
New Jersey	Annual
Pennsylvania	Annual
Massachusetts	9–15 months
Vermont	12–18 months
New York	12–18 months
Maine	1–3 years
Connecticut	Biennial
Rhode Island	Biennial

Scan here or go to <https://bit.ly/alfij> for spreadsheet of RI ALF deficiencies/survey reports from publicly available RIDOH data.

