

April 27, 2026

Support 26-S 2875

The Honorable Melissa A. Murray, Chair
SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Thank you, Chair Murray and members of the Senate Committee on Health and Human Services for considering 26-S 2875 by Senator Tiara Mack.

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 written testimony as a private citizen, but I assure you the Village Common still supports 26-S 2875.

Senator Mack's legislation seeks to bridge the chasm that often separates administrators of assisted living facilities from both their residents and their residents' family members. 26-S 2875 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 to "serve in an advisory and collaborative capacity" and to "seek mutually acceptable solutions" to problems, and
- (5) Require the assisted living facility to respond within thirty (30) business days to communications from the family or resident council.

Other states, including Connecticut and Massachusetts, require administrators to assist in the formation and unhindered operation of such resident and family councils. Administrators of homes in Rhode Island have testified in previous years against any such requirement here.

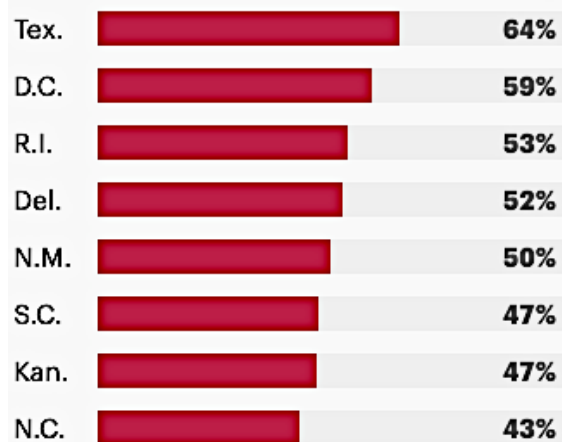
Opposition to such family and residential councils is harmful to residents and their families, particularly in light of serious deficiencies cited in reports from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services.

In a compilation by *ProPublica*, [Rhode Island ranks behind only Texas and the District of Columbia](#) in percentage of deficiencies that literally put lives at risk during inspections during the last three years. As of March 2026, [39 of Rhode Island's 73 homes were cited for "serious deficiencies"](#) that put residents in danger.

In my experience, administrators of many Rhode Island nursing homes and assisted living facilities welcome communications from residents' family and friends, but others resist or seek to limit advocacy to private conversations.

Serious Deficiencies

States by percentage of homes where at least one serious deficiency (causing "immediate jeopardy") was found during inspections in the last three years.



I recently lost a close friend in who suffered dementia and spent his final years in a New Hampshire facility. The administrator of the home 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 communication.

New Hampshire follows federal law in allowing and family councils, but it does not mandate reasonable cooperation with councils, as would be required under 26-S 2875, and there was no way to address residents' needs.

I hope Rhode Island will commit to safer and more humane care of older adults by following the examples of Connecticut and Massachusetts rather than New Hampshire.

I urge passage of 26-S 2875 to improve the quality of life for assisted living residents and lessen stress for their loved ones.

I also favor the 120-day notice period for rate increases, which is described in the Legislative Council explanation and was in last year's legislation. I am disappointed not to find that provision in the text of 26-S 2875. I hope this committee will restore it.

Please recommend this important bill for passage by the full Senate.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'H. Philip West Jr.', with a stylized flourish at the end.

H. Philip West Jr.