



**STATE OF RHODE ISLAND**  
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*Peter F. Neronha*  
*Attorney General*

July 8, 2020

The Honorable Marvin L. Abney, Chairman  
House Committee on Finance  
State House  
Providence, RI 02903

RE: HB 7624

Dear Chairman Abney:

I write today in support of HB 7624 which would mandate staffing standards, increase the quality of care provided in nursing homes, and hold nursing homes accountable for compliance.

As Attorney General, one of my most important responsibilities is ensuring and advocating for the health and safety of Rhode Islanders, particularly our most vulnerable residents.

Rhode Island is one of only a handful of states not to have a nursing home staffing standard. Consequently, our State ranks near the bottom of the national average for hours of care provided to nursing home residents. Many falls, infections, and other injuries can be prevented by ensuring that health care workers are spending the time we know nursing home residents need to be safe and well cared for. This legislation also supports hard-working nursing home staff, helping them fulfill their mission to provide quality and compassionate care.

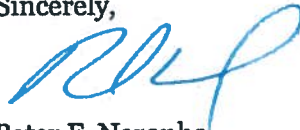
By establishing a much-needed standard, the legislation also provides for better accountability. The reporting, monitoring, and fines for non-compliance should ensure that nursing homes maintain safe staffing levels, provide training to staff, and ultimately provide better care to their residents.

The ongoing COVID-19 crisis has only further illustrated the need to ensure that our nursing homes adhere to national standards and best practices. In Rhode Island, over 720 nursing home residents have died from COVID-19, accounting for over 70% of all COVID-19-related deaths in the State. This is devastating for our community. We must do everything that we can to ensure that our nursing homes adhere to the highest safety standards and provide the level of care our residents deserve.

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As such, I urge this Committee and the entire House to support this important legislation. I thank Representative Slater for sponsoring it, and the Committee for considering my comments.

Sincerely,



Peter F. Neronha  
Attorney General

CC: House Committee on Finance



AT WATERMAN LAKE

July 7, 2020

Chairman Marvin L. Abney  
House Finance Committee Chair  
State of Rhode Island General Assembly  
82 Smith St.  
Providence, RI 02903  
Rep-abney@rilegislature.gov  
Cobrien@rilegislature.gov

**Re: Opposition to House 7624 - NURSING HOME STAFFING AND QUALITY CARE ACT**

Dear Chairman Abney,

Please accept this letter respectfully opposing H-7624. Cutting edge health care practice examines the needs of the patient and then builds a care team from across disciplines to address these unique needs. H-7624 does the opposite, it puts into law the required hours of nurses and CNAs with no flexibility to tailor individualized care. Operating a nursing home requires a broad array of people; receptionists, housekeeping, laundry, maintenance and food service in addition to nursing and CNA's. This bill sets an arbitrary number of staff, not necessarily the people with the right skills.

Nursing and CNA work is difficult and requires both a great deal of compassion and skill. This bill does not help address these shortages in long term care. As the state continues to increase the minimum wage, it becomes harder and harder to retain good staff. Retail jobs are simply more appealing to most than personal care of the impaired elderly.

Nursing homes are already required to have "sufficient nursing staff" to assure resident safety, and to attain or maintain "the highest practicable" well-being of each resident. This requirement is enforced with regular and periodic unannounced inspections. The federal agency that regulates nursing facilities, CMS, measures and reports on staffing adequacy for each nursing home in the U.S. Rhode Island's nursing homes rank **eleventh in the country** for staffing adequacy[1]. Only Maine ranks higher among the New England states.

Nursing home leaders need the flexibility to make sustainable changes that support the team in providing quality care. We respectfully ask the committee to reject H-7624.

Sincerely,

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