



June 17, 2020

## **RI Must Fund Nursing Homes To Protect our Elderly and Workers, Not Pass Mandatory Hours**

Presently, there are three bills in the legislature which would impose mandatory staffing hours on nursing homes.

Rhode Islanders should be assured that our nursing homes are among the top rated homes in the country. According to the most recently released government reports, RI was listed first in the nation for infection control by the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) and the 2019 American Health Senior Reports ranked RI as number two in quality in the nation. (The Providence Journal article June 8, "*RI Nursing Homes Among U.S. Best.*")

In terms of staffing measure, of the six New England states, RI is number two in RN hours per resident per day, with only Maine coming in higher. When RN hours and the needs of their residents are taken into account, CMS rates Rhode Island's nursing homes higher at 3.67 stars on staffing measure than it ranks New Hampshire (3.35); Vermont (3.43); Connecticut (3.38) or Massachusetts (3.18). The national average is 2.9 stars on the staffing measure.

In many states, nursing homes like those in RI and MA follow the CMS federal guidelines for staffing. In New England, only two states mandate staffing hours: VT is at 3.0 and CT is at 1.9 – both below the 3.67 staffing hours in RI. **There is no state in the nation that mandates 4.1 staffing hours, as proposed in these bills.**

**What mandatory staffing really is, is an unfunded mandate making Rhode Island an outlier in the nursing home industry. If passed, these bills will decimate the homes our elderly rely on for care and result in jobs lost across the industry in RI.**

After years of funding cuts to Medicaid reimbursement, this legislation would impose yet another burdensome cost on our homes. What is needed is adequate funding from Medicaid so that workers can receive the compensation they deserve.

Our homes were coping with difficult times before, and we are now teetering on the financial edge with the COVID-19 crisis. Adding an unfunded mandatory staffing hour regulation will exacerbate this funding issue.

We are small businesses employing thousands of RI workers and caring for thousands of RI's frail elderly. We urge the legislature to protect the jobs of our workers, the homes of our residents and the commitment of our small businesses by rejecting these bills.

Scott Fraser

RIHCA President