

Testimony of Alice Houchens in SUPPORT of Senate Bill 704: Nursing Homes – Transfer of Ownership – Site Visits and Surveys

Members of the committee, my name is Alice Houchens and I live in West Baltimore. I have worked for 32 years in the housekeeping department of a Baltimore-area nursing home and am a proud member of 1199SEIU. I like my job and the residents become like family to us.

The nursing home where I work has been sold twice. Each time, we have had to deal with uncertainty about what the new owners would do. Would we keep our jobs? Would we keep the same pay rate and hours? What would happen to our benefits?

For the residents, we were concerned about whether the new owner would follow the regulations about patient care.

I believe House Bill 674 is a good idea that would make sure the state is carefully monitoring any company that buys a nursing home in Maryland from out of state. The bill would require at least three state inspections in the first six months, and that would be a smart step.

Inspections would ensure that the staff has the right equipment, the facility has the correct amount of staffing to take care of the residents properly, including enough geriatric nursing assistants and dietary and housekeeping staff.

Having the state come in to document a new owner's practices would help protect our residents and staff.

We care for elderly people who are extremely vulnerable. This legislation would help the state protect them when a nursing home is sold. I urge you to support Senate Bill 704.

Thank you.