



HB 576

Health Care Facilities - Nursing Homes and Assisted Living Programs - Video Recordings

Position: Unfavorable

Dear Chair Pena-Melnyk & Health & Government Operations Committee Members:

My name is Ricarra Jones and I am the political director of 1199 SEIU United Healthcare Workers East. 1199SEIU is the largest healthcare workers union in the nation representing over 400,000 workers across the East Coast and over 10,000 here in Maryland and D.C. 1199SEIU opposes HB 576 because it fails to address tangible ways to improve quality care and prevent patient neglect.

HB 576 requires nursing homes and assisted living facilities: to install, operate, and maintain video surveillance across common areas to detect patient abuse, neglect, and exploitation; and to make available this video upon request to law enforcement or State personnel.

Our members know first hand how nursing home management decisions to understaff facilities diminish patient quality care. While cameras might seem like a solution to prevent abuse or neglect, they don't necessarily guarantee better care. In addition, the legislation would authorize video recordings only which may lead to ambiguity as no audio would be captured. Technology to detect abuse and carry out punitive measures does not hold nursing home owners and managers accountable to invest in direct care through hiring more staff and providing proper staff training and supervision.

1199 SEIU opposes this legislation as it violates direct care workers' and residents' right to privacy. For staff, the presence of cameras may potentially affect interactions with residents. For residents, even in public spaces like dining areas or lounges, constant surveillance could lead to feelings of discomfort, anxiety, or a loss of dignity, particularly for those who have cognitive impairments like dementia.

Lastly, installing and maintaining surveillance cameras in all common areas of nursing homes across Maryland requires a significant financial investment. Those funds could be better spent on improving staff-to-resident ratios, improving workforce retention through higher pay and benefits or investing in training programs to enhance care quality.

We urge the Attorney General's office to work with 1199SEIU on solutions that can improve patient care, bolster jobs, and increase fiscal transparency. Effective prevention of patient abuse, neglect, and exploitation requires a multi-faceted approach that includes the diverse care team committed to ensuring quality care for residents. For those reasons we request an unfavorable report on HB 576.

Sincerely,

Ricarra Jones
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