



**RIAFSA**  
Rhode Island Association of Facilities and  
Services for the Aging

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Mary K. Talbot  
401.245.8819

**ADVOCATES FOR THE ELDERLY CALL LEGISLATIVE REPORT FLAWED**

***RIAFSA and the Alliance for Better Long Term Care Urge  
Lawmakers to Scrap Study***

PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND, January 4, 2010: A newly released plan to change reimbursement rates for nursing home facilities based on the acuity of residents' needs is deeply flawed and should be scrapped, according to Rhode Island's association of non-profit nursing homes and the state's ombudsman for the elderly. The study, called "Acuity Adjusted Rates for Rhode Island Nursing Facilities," was released by DHS on December 1 and is slated to become law on February 1.

"The methodology used for this report is off-base. Quality of care hasn't been considered at all in this plan," said RIAFSA Director James Nyberg.

"We've supported efforts to keep seniors at home to contain costs," added Nyberg. "However, for the people who truly need nursing home care, that care is labor intensive and, therefore, costly. An acuity adjustor to reflect the increased care these individuals require makes sense, but this proposal doesn't include that. What's being presented actually amounts to a *cut* to many nursing homes. How can we make further cuts and provide responsible care when right now only 10 percent of our nursing homes meet or exceed federally recommended minimum staffing levels according to the Department of Health's own data?"

The state ombudsman for elder care, Alliance for Better Long Term Care Director Kathy Heren, concurred, adding, "When labor costs are cut, the inevitable *will* happen. When you combine exhausted employees with staff shortages and elderly people in need of care, study after study proves that it sets the stage for abuse and neglect. With state inspectors tapped because of budget cuts, lives could literally be at stake."

Alliance for Better Long Term Care Director Heren also questioned the logic of why an outside firm, unfamiliar with the Rhode Island long term health care system was hired to try and reform the current reimbursement system. "While the desire to obtain an objective view is laudable, the lack of historic knowledge of our system by this review team makes their findings unusable."

The new rates will be based on one statewide average price for nursing care, ignoring the differences between nursing homes and the care they provide -- a system that runs contrary to best practices used in virtually every other state. "We hope that DHS and the General Assembly will scrap this proposal and, alternatively, continue our dialog and create a system that reimburses nursing homes appropriately for staffing needs while promoting quality care," said Nyberg.

RIAFSA's formal testimony to the Department of Human Services on December 18 can be found online at <http://www.riafsa.org/press.asp>.

RIAFSA was founded in 1989 and represents the continuum of long term care providers in Rhode Island, including not-for-profit nursing homes, assisted living facilities, and senior housing providers, as well as adult day health centers. The mission of the association is to advance excellence in the field by fostering innovation, collaboration, and ethical leadership; advocating for sound public policy; providing education, collaboration, and professional development; valuing older people and their right to make choices; and promoting a continuum of services. RIAFSA is an affiliate of the American Association of Homes and Services for the Aging.

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