



To: Senate Committee on Health and Human Services
From: Linda Katz, Policy Director
Date: June 13, 2020
Re: Support S-2519: Nursing Home Staff and Quality Care Act

The Economic Progress Institute writes in support of S-2519. The bill addresses critical issues that are necessary to ensure that seniors who need the 24-7 care provided by nursing facilities are able to live safely in those environments.

Establishing minimum staffing standards is important to ensuring that residents receive the quality care that they deserve. Rhode Island is the only state in New England and one of only eleven states nationwide without a staffing standard. The minimum standard of 4.1 hours of resident care per day is the federal recommendation for quality care and it is unacceptable for Rhode Island not to have adopted a 'floor' for staffing.

As has been clearly demonstrated by COVID-19, the staff at nursing homes are incredibly hard working and extremely dedicated to providing the best care to their residents. The pandemic has also highlighted how underpaid these 'essential workers' are. Hazard pay during the pandemic is important, but the real issue is that this important sector of our workforce has been chronically underpaid. Now is the time to make investments to provide a fair wage to these front-line workers. It is critical to make an investment in wages both to ensure that working in a nursing home is an attractive profession as well as to provide economic security for people doing this important work. Additional investment for training and skills enhancement for staff to provide care for residents with increasing acuity and complex healthcare needs will help ensure that appropriate care is provided.

We urge passage of S-2519.