

**Barney Freiberg-Dale Verbal Testimony
Owner – Visiting Angels, Newton
Joint Committee on Elder Affairs
7/31/17 Hearing
1PM State House Room A-2
Re: Home Care Licensure Bills**

Hello, my name is Barney Freiberg-Dale, co-owner with my wife of Visiting Angels in Newton and Canton. Thank you for permitting me to testify today.

While I and other members of the Home Care Alliance support licensure for the private pay home care industry, I fear that a poorly crafted bill will unnecessarily increase costs without producing commensurate benefits for consumers.

And with private-pay home care, who pays for those costs? Over-zealous legislation can drive some good existing home care agencies out of the market, thereby reducing consumer choice. Or they will cause agencies across the state to raise their rates. Private-pay care is already very costly. If licensure causes the costs to go higher, more consumers will be forced into unpalatable choices:

- a. Go without needed home care, or contract for less than they need, with the resulting reduced safety and health
- b. Using other family members provide the care instead of their usual paid employment, or
- c. Seek care from the unregulated market, a “wild west” of individuals with highly variable experience, training and skills, and without supervision.

These difficult choices already exist for many families, but their numbers will increase if licensure results in higher costs. And when families make choices that result in reduced health and safety for the senior, or in underemployment by other family members, eventually the cost falls on the state. Seniors have accidents and become ill, and have higher health care costs. They spend down their nest eggs more quickly, driving them into Mass Health-funded services. Employers throughout our economy have less access to the needed skilled employees who instead are at home caring for loved ones.

The guiding principle of the legislation should be meaningful protection of vulnerable elders and their families, but at costs which are reasonable and appropriate. Toward this end, H. 344 proposed by Rep. Muratore strikes the necessary balance. By contrast, the bills offered by Sen. Welch and Rep. Garlick

propose detailed regulatory burdens that offer dubious consumer benefit, at significant cost to the private-pay agencies for compliance, and to the state for enforcement. In some areas, these bills are overly prescriptive, and should instead create a regulatory agency to duly consider costs and benefits of licensure requirements before setting them in place. For private-pay care, burdening regulations make no sense. And in other cases, these bills require financial disclosures that have no bearing on the health and safety of seniors, but violate the legitimate privacy concerns of agency owners.

Let me urge the legislature to start with the Muratore bill, which is guided by the principles outlined above, and consider any minor changes needed to it. We want licensure that will stand the test of time, not only for our seniors of today, but our seniors of tomorrow. That includes all of us: you, me, and even our younger loved ones.