



April 18, 2025

Senator Patricia Jehlen and Representative Thomas Stanley
Joint Committee on Elder Affairs
MA State House, Rooms 424 & 167
Boston, MA 02133

Chairs Jehlen and Stanley:

On behalf of the more than 80,000 Massachusetts members of 1199SEIU, including 60,000 home care workers, **we offer 199SEIU's continued strong support of *An Act to Improve Massachusetts Home Care (H.789 / S.740 ; Stanley / Jehlen)*.**

1199SEIU has been working for over a decade to advance legislation to license the Commonwealth's home care agencies. We also helped launch the state's Home Care Licensing Commission that issued its final report on October 1, 2021. By consensus, that robust stakeholder commission recommended advancing legislation directing licensure of all Massachusetts home care agencies, including suitability review of those seeking a license along with strong oversight, reporting and operating standards.ⁱ

We strongly support timely advancement of this critically important home care reform legislation, which includes much-needed protections for both home care workers and home care consumers alike. The bill directs the Secretary of Health and Human Services - in consultation with the executive office of elder affairs, the department of public health, and a new stakeholder advisory council - to promulgate rules and regulations for the licensing and conduct of a home care agency. Such regulations must include minimum standards for consumer-specific service plans, annual and ongoing training and competency requirements for home care agency staff, and strong quality metrics and operating standards for all Massachusetts home care agencies. Taken together, these licensure processes and corresponding operations standards would establish much-needed new state oversight for these home care providers.

The need for this bill is even greater than it was when initially filed, as private equity has increasingly moved into the home care space. While we directly saw the harm of private equity prioritizing profit over care in the Steward hospitals, a 2023 Health Policy Commission Report found that, in 2013-2022, there were more mergers and acquisitions in home care than any other health care sector, and many of those involved private equity.ⁱⁱ Over the past decade, nearly three dozen Massachusetts home care, home health and hospice providers have been purchased by private equity investors.ⁱⁱⁱ With very limited state regulation in these areas, these transactions threaten to reduce care quality and squeeze out community-based and locally owned competitors.

There have been increasingly urgent calls from across the Commonwealth seeking state government action to better scrutinize private equity's involvement in health care and to establish stronger state oversight over private equity acquisitions of Massachusetts health care and home care providers.^{iv} The comprehensive health care reform bill passed last December^v is a critical first step, but focuses specifically on the hospital and health systems market, not home care. *An Act to Improve Massachusetts Home Care* is a critical opportunity for the legislature to further address rapidly expanding private equity investment in the Massachusetts home care market.

In the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic and with a tight labor market, home care jobs have become less competitive, and persistent staffing shortages have meant that too many in need lack access to affordable home care. Meanwhile, the influx of private equity and the growth of for-profit home care providers over the last decade has meant that too many home care consumers and workers are impacted by private businesses prioritizing profits and shareholder investments over care quality and supporting their low-income direct care workforce.

Passage of this legislation is therefore urgently needed to establish improved state oversight over home care agency employers and better scrutinize the growth of private equity home care providers. The recruitment and retention of a sufficient number of Massachusetts home care workers will undoubtedly rely upon the enactment of significantly more state oversight of the Commonwealth's many home care agencies, along with other initiatives to improve the pay, benefits, and working conditions for the home care workforce.

Finally, *An Act to Improve Massachusetts Home Care* now also includes 1199SEIU-proposed legislation to address abuse, discrimination, and workplace bullying of home care workers, as well as home care consumer abuse or neglect. Originally filed in January 2021 as *An Act to Prevent Home Care Worker Abuse & Discrimination* and now fully incorporated in H.789/S.740, this portion of the bill directs EOHHS to adopt new minimum standards and operational procedures for addressing these issues. EOHHS, in consultation with a new Home Care Worker Abuse Stakeholder Advisory Committee and other relevant state entities, would work together on reforms designed to reduce physical, verbal, and mental abuse either of or by individual clients/consumers. This Committee would in turn develop appropriate worker training, reporting and tracking processes, and other measures that promote a safe work environment for all Massachusetts home care workers. We strongly support the inclusion of these provisions in final legislation.

We respectfully request a favorable committee recommendation for *An Act to Improve Massachusetts Home Care (H.789 / S.740 ; Stanley / Jehlen)*. Thank you for your time and careful attention to these critical and urgent issues. We stand ready to continue our collaborative and comprehensive work with the Chairs of this Committee to further our shared vision of a robust long-term care system and well-supported long-term care workforce across our great Commonwealth.

Sincerely,



Gena Frank
Political Director

ⁱ [Home Care Licensing Commission | Mass.gov](https://www.mass.gov/doc/home-care-licensing-commission-mass.gov)

ⁱⁱ See page 65 at: <https://www.mass.gov/doc/presentation-board-meeting-december-13-2023/download>

ⁱⁱⁱ See e.g. UnitedHealth Group and their Optum affiliates who continue to spend billions of dollars annually to acquire home care providers and who last summer acquired national home care giant Amedisys that was operating nearly two dozen home care and hospice affiliates across the Commonwealth. ([UnitedHealth's Optum to buy Amedisys in \\$3.3B deal](https://www.fiercehealthcare.com/news/unitedhealth-optum-to-buy-amedisys-in-3-3b-deal) ([fiercehealthcare.com](https://www.fiercehealthcare.com)) & [Warren, Jayapal call for closer scrutiny of UnitedHealth-Amedisys deal](https://www.warrenjayapal.com/news/unitedhealth-amedisys-deal) | [Healthcare Dive](https://www.healthcarediver.com))

^{iv} See e.g. the Boston Globe's 2024 editorial calling on state government to take urgent action to better "scrutinize private equity's involvement in health care" and to establish stronger state oversight over private equity acquisitions of Massachusetts health care and home care providers. (^{iv} [Health care: The problem with private equity's role in medicine \(bostonglobe.com\)](https://www.bostonglobe.com/story/health-care-the-problem-with-private-equitys-role-in-medicine-2024-01-10))

^v [Session Law - Acts of 2024 Chapter 343](#)