



*The Commonwealth of Massachusetts*  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
STATE HOUSE, BOSTON 02133-1054

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Vice Chair  
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Joint Committee on Health Care Financing  
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Chair Tom Stanley  
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Chair Patricia D. Jehlen  
24 Beacon Street, Rm 424  
Boston, MA 02133

April 3, 2025

Dear Chair Stanley, Chair Jehlen, and Honorable Members of the Joint Committee,

I write today in strong support of **H.789/S.470, *An Act to improve Massachusetts home care.*** This legislation would create a robust licensure system that would establish baseline standards for homecare agencies, to ensure a quality network of medical and non-medical homecare providers for clients. These essential baseline requirements include background checks, minimum standards for consumer plans, training requirements, minimum workers' compensation and liability, a consumer complaint process, and the maintenance of a payroll process that follows all state and federal labor and wage laws. This bill will not only improve services to home care recipients, but also working environments for providers.

In recent years, the Commonwealth has begun to take steps to improve oversight and safety for homecare clients and employees. In 2017, Governor Baker signed into law a framework for the Department of Public Health to establish a licensure structure for 'skilled' home health services, such as what may be provided by a nurse or other medical professional. Then, in 2021, the governor signed H.4017, which established a special commission to examine the Department of Public Health's nursing home licensure process and requirements. However, neither legislation addressed the essential functions of non-medical home care services providers. This encompasses workers who provide for their clients' hygienic needs, offer emotional support, perform nutritional services, conduct housekeeping, and more. Massachusetts remains one of a handful of states without a

licensure structure as a condition to provide these home care services. However, those who provide these non-medical home care services must be properly equipped by their respective agency to bear the responsibility of being intimately involved with a client's day-to-day basic needs. Nevertheless, home health and personal care aides are some of the fastest-growing occupations, with a projected growth of 34% from 2019 to 2029.<sup>1</sup> In 2019, the workforce numbered 3.5 million with a projected 1.1 million additional jobs through 2029.<sup>2</sup> Now is the time to take the next stride towards improving care for vulnerable populations and protections to those who provide them.

Studies show that the majority of older adults would prefer to age in place from the comfort of their own home, rather than taking on the stress that comes with uprooting.<sup>3</sup> Additionally, non-medical homecare is proven to boost the health and well-being of seniors while providing the opportunity for them to live independently.<sup>4</sup> Non-medical home care plays a vital role in the health and well-being of our Commonwealth's seniors and the physically disabled.

Elder abuse has been a neglected global health priority, with 1 in 6 adults worldwide (141 million people) impacted.<sup>5</sup> This kind of abuse can encompass caregiver neglect, financial exploitation, and emotional, physical, & sexual abuse.<sup>6</sup> In the U.S., pre-pandemic sources estimated that approximately one in 10 Americans age 60+ had experienced some form of elder abuse. A more recent study found that 1 in 5 older adults reported elder abuse during the COVID-19 pandemic, while another study estimated that only 1 in 24 cases of abuse are reported to authorities.<sup>7</sup> An analysis of calls to the National Center on Elder Abuse resource line showed that 13% of reported cases were perpetrated by caregivers.<sup>8</sup>

According to the Massachusetts Executive Office on Elder Affairs, our Commonwealth's Aging Services Access Points received about 50,000 allegations of elder abuse in FY23 and initiated about 30,000 investigations.<sup>9</sup> However, the most common category of abuse was self-neglect, which occurs when a senior cannot meet their basic needs, putting their

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<sup>1</sup>Small, T. et. al. (2021, September 2). Home Healthcare Workers: A Growing Workforce at High Risk for Workplace Violence. *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*. Retrieved from: <https://blogs.cdc.gov/niosh-science-blog/2021/09/02/hhc-violence/>

<sup>2</sup>Small, T. et. al. (2021, September 2).

<sup>3</sup>Baby Boomer Facts and Figures. (n.d.). *American Association of Retired Persons*. Retrieved from: <https://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/info-2014/livable-communities-facts-and-figures.html>

<sup>4</sup>What is Non-Medical Home Care? (2019, January 23). *Companions for Seniors*. Retrieved from: <https://companionsforseniors.com/2019/01/benefits-non-medical-home-care/>

<sup>5</sup>Yon, Y et. al. (2017, February 5). Elder abuse prevalence in community settings: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *The Lancet Global Health*. Retrieved from: doi: 10.1016/S2214-109X(17)30006-2. PMID: 28104184.

<sup>6</sup>Types and Signs of Abuse of Adults Aged 60+. (n.d.). Executive Office of Aging and Independence. Retrieved from: <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/types-and-signs-of-abuse-of-adults-aged-60>

<sup>7</sup>Get the Facts on Elder Abuse. (2024; July 8). *National Council on Aging*. Retrieved from: <https://www.ncoa.org/article/get-the-facts-on-elder-abuse/>

<sup>8</sup>Get the Facts on Elder Abuse. (2024, July 8).

<sup>9</sup>Annual Legislative Report. (2024, March). *Executive Office of Elder Affairs*. Retrieved from: <https://www.mass.gov/doc/elder-affairs-annual-legislative-report-2023/download>

health, safety, and well-being at risk.<sup>10</sup> The Commonwealth needs properly equipped home care professionals to address this pertinent issue. If agencies hire individuals who are not ready or well-suited to provide these services, then their workers may be contributing to the problem rather than circumventing it. Nevertheless, home care providers also face similar challenges to their personal well-being. One study found that about 22% of home care aides experience verbal abuse, with 11% of those individuals also reporting physical abuse.<sup>11</sup>

In order for home care agencies to ensure that they are staffed with individuals well-suited to care for clients and for providers to have resources to protect themselves, the Commonwealth must take action to implement basic non-medical home care requirements. This legislation establishes a committee to create minimum standards for preventing and addressing abuse and bullying of home care workers and consumers. Additionally, it mandates that home care workers and employers receive training on handling abuse, including de-escalation techniques and identifying unsafe working environments.

Massachusetts has an opportunity to be an example to the rest of the world in our attentiveness to elder and provider home care abuse. I am very thankful to the committee for all of the work that they have done in the past several sessions to address safety for our senior communities, and I hope that you all will report favorably on H.789.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Lindsay N. Sabadosa".

Lindsay N. Sabadosa  
State Representative, 1st Hampshire

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<sup>10</sup>Types and Signs of Abuse of Adults Aged 60+. (n.d.).

<sup>11</sup>Karlsson, N. (2019, June 11). Home care aides' experiences of verbal abuse: a survey of characteristics and risk factors. *Occupational and Environmental Medicine*. Retrieved from: <https://oem.bmj.com/content/76/7/448>