



March 10, 2021

Co- Chair Nosse, Co-Chair Leiber, members of the committee, my name is Kyndall Mason; I am a political and policy strategist for SEIU Local 503, focusing on long term care. Our Local represents more than 30,000 long term care workers, many of whom work in dd group homes, nursing homes and increasingly, assisted living facilities and memory care facilities. I am submitting this testimony on behalf of those members in regards to the Long Term Care Ombudsman office, specifically the Residential Facilities Ombudsman program, which serves people with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities and mental health.

SEIU advocated for this specific program, in 2013, as we saw many group and residential settings that were left out of the scope of the Long Term Care Ombudsman's crucial work. In many ways, residents of these facilities, are left with no one to advocate for them, with the exception being the workers providing supports. The job can be emotionally and physically taxing, often working understaffed. All this for a job that rarely provides a living wage. The Residential Facilities program often provides a life line, for residents and workers alike.

Since the creation of the Residential Facilities Ombudsman (RFO) we have enjoyed a strong relationship with the office. We have been able to collaborate and identify areas of need and ways in which we can work together to help make better advocates out of workers, and to engage with the communities in which these facilities exist. Over the last few budget sessions, we see that this program is often faces cuts, in favor of expansion in APD focused programs.

I submit this testimony to ask that you consider making investments in the State Long Term Care Ombudsman's office in its entirety. There is value in all the programs within that office, and each is underfunded at the moment. Please make the choice to invest in all of the programs at the Ombudsman's office.

Thank you for your time today.

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