

April 1, 2025

Wardwell Home for the Aging, Inc. Comment on LD 979

Hello, my name is Kimberly Boisvert, and I am the Executive Director and Administrator at the Wardwell Home and Wardwell Gardens in Saco. We serve 46 of our community's elderly in Southern Maine in our residential care and assisted living settings. I have been involved in long-term care since 1995, and joined Wardwell in 2008 to help continue its mission that was established proudly in 1889.

I am speaking to you in opposition of the proposed rule changes as outlined in bill LD 979 regarding the Provisionally Adopted 10-144 CMR Ch. 113, Assisted Housing Programs Licensing Rules. Part A & Part B.

These changes will adversely affect our Wardwell Home:

- The proposed policy, Part B, references an increase and addition of staffing ratios within direct care. This action adds to the continued struggle of maintaining a core team of caregivers.

Recovery since the pandemic has been slow, with many employees in healthcare leaving the workforce entirely. This has led to the need to attract new help, which has not been easy, in an extremely competitive job market. Finding more staff, even on a graduated schedule, would be an added obstacle that would add to our everyday responsibilities.

- I must address the associated financial impacts: adding additional caregivers to a small nonprofit budget is extremely costly. Adding a minimum of 3 full time employees increases costs to nearly \$150,000 per year. How will I meet these costs and try to keep our type of care affordable? This increase is for a facility that serves 16. Imagine the impact, system-wide, on staffing requirements in people and in dollars. Our Maine employment landscape cannot meet these expectations.

These proposed changes would disturb a system that works for Wardwell, operationally and financially. I am sure that other providers would echo this sentiment.

Let us, as providers, be a resource to you. Visit us for first-hand experiences. If you cannot visit us, call. We'd be glad to have one on one conversations about our day – not only to discuss the obstacles we face, but to share the bright spots, as there are many. It will give you a brand new perspective of what we do. My Resident Services Director/LPN, Social Worker, Food Service Director, Maintenance Director, Finance Director, and Activities Director would make themselves available so you can get a complete taste of who we are and what we do.

In summary, I ask the Department to not pass the rules as drafted, and to reevaluate the proposed rule changes with the aforementioned concerns. Please be mindful about the significant impacts and pressures on a system that is already strained, and the effects on our Wardwell HOME and our Wardwell Family.

We Thank You,

Kimberly D. Boisvert
Executive Director