



## New Law to Improve Care, Safety for Nursing Home Residents

### *Illinois Governor Signs AARP-backed Reform Legislation*

CHICAGO, July 29 /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ -- For too long, thousands of nursing home residents in Illinois lived in unsafe conditions, receiving substandard care from understaffed institutions. But the public outcry for reform, sprung by media exposes of conditions in many for profit nursing homes resulted in sweeping, AARP-backed legislation that will greatly improve the quality of care and safety environment for residents.

AARP today joined with dozens of advocacy organizations and legislators, as Governor Pat Quinn signed into law Senate Bill 326. The measure was sponsored by Senators Heather Steans (D-Chicago) and Jacqueline Collins (D-Chicago), and Representatives Barbara Flynn-Currie (D-Chicago), and Sara Feigenholtz (D-Chicago).

"Thousands of nursing home residents in Illinois will be able to age with dignity while receiving the quality of care they need, and in the safe environment they deserve, thanks to the much needed reforms that this legislation brings," said Bob Gallo, AARP Illinois Senior State Director. "Governor Quinn is taking a step in the right direction by signing this bill into law. But more remains to be done as we implement these reforms, namely the urgent need to address the racial disparity issues prevalent in many Chicago nursing homes."

Along with AARP, Illinois Citizens for Better Care, SEIU, Next Steps and many other advocates negotiated for months to complete the most sweeping reforms to nursing homes Illinois has seen.

The need for legislative reforms arose from newspaper stories – starting with the 2009 series from the Chicago Tribune and the Chicago Reporter – that shone a light on unacceptable conditions in which thousands of seniors live in for profit nursing homes across the state.

The stories documented how residents had to live with dangerous individuals; had been physically, mentally, and even sexually abused by other residents; and were often given the wrong diagnosis or wrong medications – even dangerous anti-psychotic drugs – for their treatments. In many of the nursing homes documented in the series of articles, the problems were further compounded by staffing shortages. Illinois' for profit nursing homes currently have the lowest staffing ratios in the nation.

SB 326 will address these problems by, among other things:

- Establishing staffing ratios that will ensure residents are receiving adequate staff time to meet their needs;
- Creating meaningful regulations, including disincentives and penalties for providing bad care;
- Providing requirements and regulations to promote resident safety, and providing seniors with a protected environment;
- Improving the screening process in order to protect individuals who need nursing home care;
- Mandating that enough surveyors be available to provide real accountability for nursing homes that do not meet minimum standards.

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