

ahca

American Health Care Association

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October 31, 2005

The Honorable John B. Larson
 U.S. House of Representatives
 1005 Longworth House Office Building
 Washington, D.C. 20515-0701

Dear Congressman Larson:



On behalf of the American Health Care Association, whose members are entrusted with the safety and care of nearly one million nursing home residents, I am writing to express our support for the "Nursing Home Fire Safety Act of 2005", legislation you will soon introduce.

While the fire safety record of nursing homes has been very good in recent years, two tragic multi-death fires during 2003 occurred and 31 lives were lost, including 16 lives in your home district of Hartford. While these facilities were not required to be equipped with automatic fire sprinklers, National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) records clearly indicate that automatic sprinkler systems dramatically improve the survival chances of those who cannot save themselves in a nursing home fire, specifically the frail elderly, children and people with disabilities. This is critically important because, as NFPA records show, there has never been a multi-death fire in a nursing facility that was fully equipped with automatic fire sprinklers.

For this reason, AHCA continues to be a leading advocate for the full sprinkling of all nursing facilities nationwide. Your legislation provides for that by calling on the Centers on Medicare and Medicaid to adopt the full sprinkling requirement contained in the 2006 edition of the Life Safety Code approved earlier this year by the NFPA. Additionally, your legislation provides financial assistance to providers through low interest loans and "hardship" grants. Without this assistance, many nursing facilities would be unable to access the dollars needed to complete the retrofit work.

Congressman Larson, AHCA supports and commends you for the leadership you are providing with the introduction of the "Nursing Home Fire Safety Act of 2005." We will work with you to build co-sponsorship for this legislation with the goal of seeing it passed and enacted before the 109th Congress adjourns.

Sincerely,


 Bruce Yarwood
 Acting President & CEO

Again - that's many hats for carrying the load

cc: Toni Fatone