

# U.S. SENATOR BOB CASEY



CHAIRMAN Special Committee on Aging

## Strengthening Advocacy for Long-Term Care Residents Act

*U.S. Senators Bob Casey (D-PA) and Tim Kaine (D-VA)*

### Why do we need the Strengthening Advocacy for Long-Term Care Residents Act?

Established under the *Older Americans Act*, the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program (Ombudsman program) advocates for residents of nursing homes, assisted living facilities, and other long-term care (LTC) settings by providing residents and their families with confidential information and assistance to resolve quality of life and civil rights issues. In Fiscal Year 2022, Ombudsman program staff and volunteers were responsible for serving more than 3 million residents across 76,000 LTC facilities.

With the growing number of LTC residents and increasing complexity of cases, Ombudsman program staff and volunteers face challenges ensuring that residents receive dignified care and have their rights protected. Congressional action is needed to ensure this critical program can continue to support those residing in LTC facilities.

### The Strengthening Advocacy for Long-Term Care Residents Act will:

- Require the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine to study and issue a report on the recommended ombudsman-to-bed staffing ratio: the current staffing ratio, which was last updated nearly 30 years ago, recommends one ombudsman to 2,000 beds, and current data indicates that caseloads far exceed that threshold.
- Reinstatement of a National Director for the Ombudsman program. Previous restructuring under the Trump Administration effectively phased out this position: state and local ombudsmen have reported that the lack of a National Director impedes their ability to effectively serve residents.
- Establish categories of duties for ombudsman volunteers and assign appropriate training requirements for volunteers based on those categories: currently, both paid ombudsmen and volunteers have the same training requirements, which can be a barrier to volunteer recruitment.

### Senator Casey as a leader on issues impacting LTC residents:

This legislation builds on Senator Casey's longstanding effort to address the needs of older adults and people with disabilities, especially those residing in LTC facilities:

- Earlier this Congress, Senator Casey released a report entitled, [\*Uninspected and Neglected\*](#), which demonstrated the critical role Ombudsman program staff play in safeguarding nursing home residents. The report also highlighted the challenges facing state and local Ombudsman programs. In response to the report's findings, Senator Casey sent a letter to the U.S. Government Accountability Office asking the agency to examine the needs of the program.
- In addition, knowing that many of the issues in LTC facilities stem from staffing shortages, Senator Casey introduced the [\*Long-Term Care Workforce Support Act\*](#), a landmark piece of legislation that would invest billions of dollars in bolstering the LTC workforce, thus ensuring those providing care are fairly compensated and supported in the workplace.

- Senator Casey is also leading the reauthorization of the *Older Americans Act* this year and held a [hearing](#) in May 2024 to discuss reauthorization priorities. The Connecticut State Ombudsman served as a witness at this hearing.

**Endorsing Organizations:** District of Columbia Long-Term Care Ombudsman, National Association of State Long-Term Care Ombudsman Programs (NASOP), Pennsylvania Association for Area Agencies on Aging, Pennsylvania State Long-Term Care Ombudsman, USAging, Virginia Association of Area Agencies on Aging