**As a long term-care ombudsman within your district**, I am writing to urge you to co-sponsor the Put a Registered Nurse in the Nursing Home Act (H.R. \_\_\_\_).

Currently, nursing homes participating in the Medicare and/or Medicaid programs are only required to have a registered nurse (RN) on-site for eight consecutive hours each day, regardless of the size of the facility. H.R. \_\_\_\_ would require nursing homes receiving Medicare and/or Medicaid reimbursement to have a direct-care RN on duty 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

**Having been in a number of nursing homes as a long-term care ombudsman, I have witnessed first-hand what it is like for residents to not have round-the-clock access to RN care, particularly during evening shifts. Although certified nursing assistants and licensed practical nurses play important roles in the care of residents, they cannot fulfill the role of an RN. I have heard directly from family members and residents that important resident care needs have gone unmet due to the lack of an RN presence. I also know of cases where residents had to be sent to the hospital because there was no RN on site who could properly assess residents’ conditions. Residents need access to RN care all day, every day, and this is why H.R. \_\_\_\_ is so important.**

Over the past two decades, the medical intensity and complexity of care for nursing home residents has increased dramatically. The twenty-four hour presence of an RN is critical to meeting residents’ clinical needs. Providing RN coverage for only 8 hours a day leaves the residents vulnerable, undermining effective prevention of complications and possibly delaying important interventions. In addition, the absence of RN staffing for up to 16 hours each day means that there is no one present capable of assessing and responding when residents’ medical conditions suddenly change or deteriorate.

Higher RN levels result in lower antipsychotic use, fewer pressure ulcers, less restraint use and cognitive decline, fewer urinary tract infections and catheterizations, less weight loss and less decrease in function. Of particular relevance to today’s health care improvement initiatives is the decrease in unnecessary hospitalizations of nursing home residents—and research has shown that savings in hospitalizations pay for the increased RN time.

By supporting continuous direct-care RN staffing, we will ensure that some of our most vulnerable Americans have the care they deserve in nursing homes. **Again, as a long-term care ombudsman who has seen firsthand what it means for residents to not have access to an RN and as one of your constituents**, I strongly urge you to become a co-sponsor of the Put a Registered Nurse in the Nursing Home Act (H.R. \_\_\_\_) today.