BILL HARDIMAN
29TH DISTRICT
P.O. BOX 30036
LANSING, MICHIGAN 48909-7536
PHONE: (517) 373-1801
FAX: (517) 373-5801
senbhardiman@senate.michigan.gov

THE SENATE
STATE OF MICHIGAN

FAMILIES & HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE, CHAIR
APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE, MEMBER
SUBCOMMITTEES:
CHAIR, FAMILY INDEPENDENCE AGENCY
CAPITAL OUTLAY
COMMERCE, LABOR & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
HIGHER EDUCATION

February 28, 2006

The Honorable Leon Drolet
Chairman
House Standing Committee on Government Operations
Michigan House of Representatives
Room N-797 Anderson House Office Building
Lansing, Michigan 48909

Dear Chairman Drolet:

Thank you for scheduling a committee hearing on Senate Bills 1026—1030 and House Bills 5744 and 5745. I would be present myself for this important discussion, but the Senate will be in session during the time of the hearing, and several roll call votes are expected. In lieu of my attendance, I hope that you would indulge me the opportunity to enter a brief letter of support for this legislation into the committee record.

The goal of these bills is to prevent the promulgation of rules which would create artificial and arbitrary distinctions among caregivers and service providers for many human services. Preventing these rules from being promulgated would also hopefully communicate to the citizens of Michigan that regulations concerning the care of their beloved senior or infirm family members and neighbors would be based on sound reasoning and thoughtful policy.

The rules as drafted depart from those standards. They would impose significant and burdensome regulations on providers, or suspend those regulations, solely on the presence or absence of a collective bargaining agreement. The case has simply not been made that this arbitrary standard is related to patient or resident care rather than a parochial interest as a labor organizing tool. More to the point, the cost to providers of satisfying the requirements of these rules would take money out of the patient's room, and transfer it to the clerks and recordkeepers in the front office. This is the wrong priority for the use of these funds, and contrary to the desires of most Michigan families. Also, the rushed and closed process for developing these draft rules undermines any confidence in the final product, and suggests a cynicism toward a meaningful dialogue.

I do not intend Senate Bill 1026, which I sponsored, or the other bills I supported to be an "anti-union" ploy. As a former mayor who dealt with public employee unions, I know they have a role

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and a purpose. The laws of the land ensure that employee groups who desire to form a union can do so, and these bills do not prevent that.

What the bills will do, however, is prevent a bad policy from taking effect. The policy of these artificial advantages for facilities with union contracts is bad because it attempts to convince Michigan residents that there is a compelling connection between union representation and quality of care when that case has not been made. The policy is also bad because it detracts or delays from a serious discussion of real issues in the provision of these services.

I hope that Governor Granholm will reverse the direction of her administration in pursuing these rules. I urge the House Standing Committee on Government Operations to strongly support these bills, and stand against these rules.

Thank you again for your consideration of these bills, and please accept my apologies for not being present.

Sincerely,

Bill Hardiman
State Senator
29th District