

## **Windy Hill Village hosts hearing on social work amendment**

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**PHILIPSBURG** - The House Professional Licensure Committee held a public hearing yesterday on House Bill 987, social worker exemption in nursing, at Windy Hill Village, a part of Presbyterian Senior Living.

Testimony both for and against the bill, sponsored by state Rep. R. Taylor, D-151 of Horsham, lasted for about two hours.

HB-987 amends the act of July 9, 1987, to provide an exemption from the requirements of a social worker to those social workers employed by nursing homes because those workers complying with federal regulations and state Department of Health regulations may not also comply with the state statutory requirement for use of the title or abbreviation of social worker.

The committee first heard testimony from the trio of Anne Wantz, chief operating officer of the Pennsylvania Health Care Association; Megan Patrick, administrator of Ridgeview Elder Care Rehabilitation Center, Curwensville; and Ed Schuch, administrator of HRC Manor Care of Easton, all proponents of the HB-987.

Ms. Patrick and Mr. Schuch both testified to the difficulty of finding candidates with a degree specific to social work in rural settings such as the ones where their facilities are located.

Mr. Schuch said it took three months to find a qualified social worker to fill a position that opened at his facility and also testified there is little an employee with a social worker degree can do that a worker with a similar degree in a human services degree, such as sociology or psychology, can not perform as well.

Jenna Menhert, executive director of the National Association of Social Workers, gave testimony rebutting the comments of Ms. Patrick and Ms. Schuch by stating there 40 colleges and universities in the state that offer degrees specific to social work and that no shortage in qualified social workers exists. She testified that often nursing homes are not interested in employing individuals with degrees in social work because those individuals are trained to be an advocate for the rights of their patients.

She also testified that 92 percent of nursing homes in the state have been cited for violations by the DOH and that 39 percent of those violations are related to quality of life of the residents.

She attributed that figure to the fact that many workers serving in social worker positions hold degrees human services not specific to social work and argued the exemption in HB-987 was likely to result in an increase in that figure.

State Rep. Patrick McGeehan, D-173 of Philadelphia, committee chairman, said it was clear to him the bill needed some additional investigation before being acted on in the House and thanked all those who testified at the hearing.

Article can be found at: <http://www.theprogressnews.com/default.asp?read=17581>