

Washington, DC -- Today, U.S. Representative Michael A. Arcuri (D-Utica) unveiled legislation he introduced in Congress to provide nursing homes, assisted living facilities, and hospices with resources to upgrade fire detection and suppression equipment to ensure the safety of their residents.

“The Rome Nursing Home provides critical skilled care and services to local seniors and their families. The legislation I have introduced in Congress will help local facilities like Rome upgrade and expand existing fire safety systems – offering a competitive federal grant program to provide the highest quality of care and keep seniors safe,” **said Arcuri, a member of the Congressional Fire Services Caucus**

. “As new regulations to improve fire safety in nursing homes and care facilities come into effect, it is vital that we ensure these facilities have the resources they need to upgrade fire prevention and detection systems. I have worked closely with local nursing homes and first responders to create a bill that will make sure our most vulnerable citizens are safe from fire.”

Arcuri’s legislation, the Long-Term Care Life Safety Act (H.R. 2882), would establish a demonstration incentive competitive grant program within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to promote professional retrofit installation of fire detection systems and fire prevention technologies in nursing homes, hospice centers, and assisted living facilities.

Approximately 60% of skilled nursing facilities in New York were built in the 1960s and the 1970s. Although virtually all facilities in New York are at least partially covered by fire sprinklers, many facilities fall short of the “fully sprinklered” definition which will be employed by the federal government within the next five years. H.R. 2882 would allow facilities access to federal funding to upgrade fire prevention systems and meet new requirements.

H.R.2882 also directs HHS to give priority consideration to facilities that demonstrate a “need or hardship” to ensure that older facilities receive assistance first.

“The New York State Health Facilities Association (NYSHFA) applauds the efforts of Representative Arcuri to create a grant program to provide funding for nursing homes to upgrade their sprinkler systems,” **said Robert J. Murphy, CAE, Executive Vice President for Governmental Affairs, New York State Health Facilities Association.**

“Since many New York nursing homes were built in the 1960s and 1970s and do maintain

sprinkler systems, this legislation would provide them with access to capital to allow them to upgrade their systems to the existing state of the art specifications. We thank Representative Arcuri for his leadership in advancing this program which will truly enhance the safety of the patients and employees entrusted to our care.”

In the 24th Congressional District, there are 90 assisted living centers, 12 hospice and palliative care centers, and over 20 nursing homes.

“Rome Nursing Home is a small partially sprinklered eighty bed nursing home that primarily serves Medicaid and Medicare patients. The cost to install a fully sprinklered system for the building would be approximately \$175,000.00. This legislation provides needed grant money for the installation and purchase of sprinkler systems. The legislation would enhance the safety of our residents and staff. Providing funding to nursing homes that care for our most vulnerable members of society is the right thing to do, and we support Congressman Arcuri’s fire safety legislation,” **said Rome Nursing Home Administrator Michael Svendsen.**

Arcuri introduced H.R. 2882 in June, and the bill was referred to the House Energy and Commerce Committee. H.R.2882 would authorize \$40 million for each fiscal year 2008 through 2012. Regulations would be developed by HHS, and funding would be subject to the annual appropriations process. At this time there is not a Senate companion bill.

Fire prevention and suppression equipment that could be installed with grant funding include: smoke detectors, automatic sensors, fire sprinklers, automatic suppression systems, and other technologies approved by the National Fire Protection Association.

According to the National Fire Protection Association, 2,800 fires are reported per year in nursing homes — or roughly one for every six nursing homes.

H.R. 2882 has been endorsed by the following organizations:

National Fire Protection Association
National Burglar and Fire Alarm Association
NYS Burglar and Fire Alarm Association
Assisted Living Federation of America
National Center for Assisted Living

National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization
New York State Health Facilities Association

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