Bill allowing cameras in nursing homes advances with no industry opposition

By Clark Kauffman lowa Capital Dispatch

Eight months ago, nursing home lobbyists said they'd work this year to kill legislation allowing cameras in nursing homes, but on Tuesday they said they were neutral on the idea.

The bill in question, House File 537, would prevent nursing homes from prohibiting the use of so-called "granny cams" that provide families with a video feed of activity inside a resident's room. For residents who reside in a shared room, the roommate would have to agree to the use of the camera, and a notice posted to the door would alert visitors and staff to the presence of the camera.

For the past several years, the bill has faced stiff opposition from the nursing home industry and hasn't advanced. On Tuesday, however, the three-member House Health and Human Services Appropriations Subcommittee unanimously agreed to forward the bill for consideration by the full committee.

Brent Willett of the Iowa Health Care Association. (Photo courtesy of

At Tuesday's meeting, Brent Willett, the head of the Iowa Health Care Association, which lobbies lawmakers on behalf of nursing homes, told representatives that IHCA took no position on the bill in 2023 and that it remains

neutral on the bill in 2024.
"IHCA was neutral on the bill in 2023 and we're currently neutral on the legislation today," Willet said. "We're in the process of organizing our thoughts and we just ask for the opportunity to work with the committee as this process unfolds."

Chairman Rep. Joel Fry, a Republican from Osceola, said, "I want to thank the lobby because you and I have worked on this in various ways together. Certainly, we've had some tough conversations over the last few years on this bill, but with the goal being that we provide for Iowans safe, high-quality health care in our facilities."

In taped conversations posted to the IHCA website last year, the association's lobbyists told the owners and administrators of Iowa's nursing homes that they had worked hard to kill the cameras-in-nursing-homes bill and that they would do so again in 2024.

In the opening days of the 2023 session, IHCA lobbyist Merea Bentrott told association members she and a colleague had been "successful in redirecting" a legislator who was backing the measure.

Then, in March 2023, Bentrott told IHCA members the bill was "something we've opposed for many, many years." She added: "I'm happy to say that yesterday we were able to kill that legislation... That is good news. That was on the House side of things. The bill never had legs in the Senate. We talked to them very early on and we were able to get them to a point where they agreed that camera legislation was not something that they would make an issue this year. So we were confident we would be able to kill the bill but we didn't even want it to get to a subcommittee in the House and we were successful in preventing that from happening. So that is a big win... That is good news for us."

In April 2023, Bentrott again spoke of IHCA's efforts to fight cameras in nursing homes, telling the nursing home owners that the association was "kind of locked and loaded and ready to go on this... We were able to kind of squash that very early in the session and get that off our plate."

Merea Bentrott, lobbyist for the Iowa Health Care Association. (Photo courtesy of IHCA)

After the session ended, in May 2023, Bentrott warned IHCA members the issue was likely to resurface in 2024. "Best case scenario is that we

kill it before it even gets any legs," she said.

The recordings of the IHCA lobbyists were pulled from the organization's website shortly after the Iowa Capital Dispatch reported their contents in December.

At Tuesday's sub-committee meeting, Rep. Timi M. Brown-Powers, a Democrat from Waterloo, said she has had some concerns about the impact of cameras on patient dignity and privacy, but acknowledged she didn't know whether the video from such devices was routed to residents' families or to care facility personnel.

Due to ongoing staff-

ing issues in Iowa nursing homes, she said, "We need to do something. Doing nothing is not an option at this juncture but I do have some questions to make sure we are giving the best care, the most dignity to these folks, and are keeping people safe, all at the same time"

Rep. Brooke Boden, a Republican from Indianola, said she, too, supports the bill and is "ecstatic" it has resurfaced. "I do believe that Iowa can do this for our most vulnerable citizens," she said. She noted the cameras can



By Jeff Lundauist/NT Publisher

protect not just residents but also workers in nursing homes when issues arise that might unfairly implicate a caregiver

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NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING — PROPOSED BUDGET Fiscal Year July 1, 2024 - June 30, 2025 Audubon County Emergency Management Commission

The Emergency Management Commission of the above-named County will conduct a public hearing on the proposed fiscal year 2024/2025 budget as follows:

Meeting Date: 2/13/2024 Meeting Time: 06:00 PM Meeting Location: (Audubon County Courthouse Board of Supervisors Room 318 Leroy St. Audubon, IA 50025)

At the public hearing any resident or taxpayer may present objections to, or arguments in favor of, any part of the proposed budget. This notice represents a summary of the supporting detail of receipts and expenditures on file with the County Coordinator.

		Actual FYE June 30, 2023	Estimated FYE June 30, 2024	Proposed FYE June 30, 2025	
BEGINNING FUND BALANCE:		23,298	60,096	8,809	
REVENUES:				100 No. 100 No	
County Contribution	2	75,000	75,000	135,000	
Other Revenues	3	37,624	20,000	1,000	
Total Revenues (2+3)	4	112,624	95,000	136,000	
EXPENDITURES:					
Administration and Operations	5	75,826	146,287	121,285	
Capital Outlays	6	0	0	15,000	
Total Expenditures (5+6)	7	75,826	146,287	136,285	
Total Ending Fund Balance	8	60,096	8,809	8,524	

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NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING BUDGET ESTIMATE Fiscal Year July 1, 2024 - June 30, 2025 Audubon County 911 Service Board

The 911 Service Board of the above named jurisdiction will conduct a public hearing on the proposed fiscal year budget as follows:

Meeting Date: 2/13/2024 Meeting Time: 06:00 PM Meeting Location: (Audubon County Courthouse Board of Supervisors Room 318 Leroy St. Audubon IA, 50025)

At the public hearing, any resident or taxpayer may present objections to, or arguments in favor of, any part of the proposed budget. This notice represents a summary of the supporting detail of budgeted receipts and expenditures on file with the 911 Service Board Secretary. Copies of the Supplemental Budget Detail will be furnished upon request.

	FYE June 30, 2023 Actual Expenditures	2024 Re- Estimated	FYE June 30, 2025 Proposed Expenditures	Transfers Out	Estimated Ending Fund Balance June 30, 2025	Estimated Beginning Fund Balance July 1, 2024	Estimated Other Receipts	Transfers In	Estimated Amount To Be Raised By Surcharge
1. Surcharge Fund	203,439	148,200	246,700	0	415,162	516,362	500	100	145,000
2. Operating Fund	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
3. TOTAL	203,439	148,200	246,700	0	415,162	516,362	500	0	145,000

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