

Close nursing home, Rush says

Report on care at Wentworth Rehab spurs call for action

By SAM ROE
Chicago Tribune

Saying conditions at the Wentworth Rehab nursing home on the South Side were "deplorable and despicable," U.S. Rep. Bobby Rush of Illinois is calling on federal regulators to investigate and for the facility's operators to shut it down.

"I will not stand for any nefarious actors who prey on the most vulnerable members of our society," Rush said in a statement Friday. "We should be protecting those individuals and ensuring that they are cared for and treated with dignity. This entire situation has been a catastrophe, and we must right this wrong."

Rush, a Democrat whose district includes Wentworth Rehabilitation & Health Care Center, said he was taking action in response to a Tribune story published Thursday. The newspaper documented how state inspection reports on Wentworth from 2010 to this past April reveal a pattern of poor care, repeat violations and few penalties.

The federal Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services has put Wentworth on a list of America's 83 most chronically poor nursing facilities; the home is the only

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one in Chicago on the list.

"I was shocked to read about the callous disregard demonstrated for our poor and vulnerable seniors" at Wentworth, Rush said. "These allegations of abuse, neglect, and carelessness must not go unpunished." The congressman made similar statements Friday on the House floor.

Wentworth, on West 69th Street in Englewood, is part of the Alden nursing home chain, a string of more than two dozen facilities in Illinois and southern Wisconsin. The chairman of the board of directors of Alden Management Services is Floyd Schlossberg.

Rush called on the firm to close Wentworth. "Those who have been affected by this reprehensible behavior deserve better," he said. "This should not be happening here. This is America."

Alden spokeswoman Victoria Wolpoff did not immediately respond to an email seeking comment.

Rush also wrote to the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, calling on the agency to end funding for the home "due to its reckless and callous disregard for the health, welfare and lives of its residents."

The agency last month reported that Wentworth has shown significant improvement, even as it has stayed on the list of the most troubled nursing homes.

In a letter to the Federal Trade Commission, Rush asked the agency to investigate Wentworth's claims of quality care. The Tribune reported that Wentworth's website boasts of a four-star quality rating from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services. In truth, the agency gives the home an overall rating of one out of five stars, the lowest possible score.