In response to concerns raised by family members about the care and safety of their loved ones in nursing homes, Illinois has become one of the first U.S. states to allow the use of cameras in resident rooms. HB 2462, signed into law in 2015, took effect in January.

Under the measure, recordings from these cameras can be admitted as evidence in administrative, civil and criminal proceedings. Criminal penalties have also been established for any person who intentionally tampers with or destroys a recording. The cameras must be paid for and maintained by nursing home residents or their representatives.

According to the Illinois attorney general’s office, the state receives more than 21,000 calls annually and responds to approximately 5,000 complaints related to suspected neglect or negligence in nursing homes. In 2013, the Department of Public Health found 106 allegations of abuse, neglect or misappropriation of property against residents by facility staff to be valid. In 2014, the Pew Charitable Trusts reported that four other states (none in the Midwest) had laws permitting nursing home residents to install cameras in their rooms.