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Dear Senators Billig and Schoesler and Representatives Jinkins and Wilcox:

I reach out to signal to you our support of the attached letter from Bill Moss, Assistant Secretary ALTSA. The Moss letter requests the extension of certain enumerated long term care waivers. As you know, a number of the Governor's proclamations, including these important waivers, are set to expire on May 31st.

We believe these waivers remain critically important in protecting the health and safety of our state's long term care residents. We agree with ALTSA's recommendation that these waivers be extended until a special (or regular, whichever comes first) legislative session begins. We suggest that a number of these waivers should be embodied in a statutory COVID Preparedness framework to enable our state's long term care system to more immediately and effectively respond to prevent and mitigate the predicted future outbreak of COVID. A statutory framework that can immediately take effect, upon a declaration of COVID outbreak, will also enable long term care providers to prepare for COVID through the development and implementation of policies and procedures and staff training. Additionally, this legal framework could allow additional needed time and flexibility as providers must gradually transition back into compliance with standard licensing requirements.

Notably, Proclamations 20-6 and 20-16, which restrict visitation, remain necessary to protect the vulnerable population served in long term care. While the rest of the state begins to re-open, we should exercise extreme caution as families, friends and staff begin to increasingly move about the broader community and enter/re-enter the facility. Minimizing or restricting visitation is an essential tool to lower the attendant risk of increased exposure within long term care, particularly as our state reopens, county by county.

We must also complete point prevalence testing to better understand asymptomatic infection prevalence in long term care before layering on the added risks of reopening our state. We must identify asymptomatic positive residents and staff to quickly cohort residents and temporarily remove staff. These are important internal controls to mitigate virus spread before and as we move to reopen the state.

LeadingAge Washington asks for your support of ALTSA's recommendations and to, in turn, quickly inform and authorize the Governor to extend these waivers. Again, these current waivers expire in two just days, on Sunday.

Should you have questions, please don't hesitate to ask. Thank you in advance for your support of our seniors who are most at risk and susceptible to this virus with oftentimes deadly outcomes.

Best,

Deb

Deb Murphy, MPA, J.D.  
President/Chief Executive Officer  
LeadingAge Washington