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Dear Senators Billig and Schoesler and Representatives Jenkins and Wilcox:

We write to you today in regards to the long term care waivers which are set to expire on June 17th. We ask for your support in extending these critically important waivers to protect the health and safety of our state's long term care residents. It is important to remember that while communities start to open back up, we are still actively battling this virus in long term care.

While extending all of these waivers is essential, we understand the most challenging issue is Proclamations 20-6 and 20-16, which restrict visitation. Currently, DSHS, in coordination with DOH and the Governor's office, is working on a phased approach to lifting visitation restrictions in long term care. While the restriction of visitors is still needed until these guidelines are finalized and distributed to long term care providers, this waiver could be separated from all others and extended until such time as the state issues its guidelines. At that time, an amended waiver can be developed to allow visitation under certain specific circumstances. Additionally, point prevalence testing to understand asymptomatic infection prevalence in long term care should be completed before allowing visitation. While the testing due dates are 6/12 for skilled nursing facilities and 6/26 for memory care, numerous barriers have arisen delaying this process.

It is, however, imperative for the remainder of the waivers to be extended for a longer period of time. We again recommend that these waivers be extended until a special (or regular, whichever comes first) legislative session is able to more permanently suspend and phase in certain laws during an emergency outbreak of a contagious disease like COVID. Providers cannot quickly and easily reverse or unwind the many changes that have been put into place and immediately be in compliance with normal operating procedures and requirements. If these waivers are not extended, it could have serious implications for our workforce and limit our ability to care for COVID positive residents in long term care.

LeadingAge Washington asks for your support to extend these waivers. Should you have any questions, please don't hesitate to ask.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Deb Murphy".

Deb Murphy
President/CEO