



6811 Campfield Road  
Baltimore, MD 21207

**TO:** The Honorable Shane Pendergrass  
Chairwoman, Health and Government Operations Committee

**FROM:** LeadingAge Maryland

**SUBJECT:** House Bill 983, Nursing Homes - COVID-19 – Visitation

**DATE:** February 18, 2021

**POSITION:** **Favorable with Amendment**

LeadingAge Maryland writes to request a favorable report with amendment on House Bill 983, Nursing Homes - COVID-19 - Visitation.

LeadingAge Maryland is a community of not-for-profit aging services organizations serving residents and clients through continuing care retirement communities, affordable senior housing, assisted living, nursing homes and home and community-based services. We represent more than 120 not-for-profit organizations, including the vast majority of CCRCs in Maryland. Our mission is to expand the world of possibilities for aging in Maryland. We partner with consumers, caregivers, researchers, faith communities and others who care about aging in Maryland.

Under House Bill 983, the Maryland Department of Health (MDH) is required to develop guidelines relating to the restrictions on personal and compassionate care visitation that a nursing home may impose to reduce the spread of COVID-19. This bill also mandates that guidelines include a requirement that nursing homes allow visitation by certain visitors, restrict certain visitors to designated areas, require visitors to follow certain safety protocols, require the use of personal protective equipment, require social distancing and other appropriate protocols

LeadingAge Maryland appreciates the Sponsor's intent and we fully support family visitation. Social connection is vital to overall well-being, and we fully support and promote opportunities for residents to connect and visit with loved ones. Our members continually work to facilitate connection through technology, and whenever possible, in person visits.

During non-COVID-19 times, there are ample opportunities and support for in person visitation. There are existing robust regulations and guidance that inform providers approach to visitation. There are both federal and state regulations and guidance that speak to visitation in nursing homes, state regulations for assisted living, and the State Ombudsman program through the Department of Aging to assist with ensuring residents rights in a variety of settings.

Our members share the frustration families experienced as they sought to visit with relatives in the last year. Often caught between the family and the ever-changing requirements, providers witnessed how challenging visitation is during the pandemic. LeadingAge Maryland supports clear guidelines from MDH. We offer the following amendment to ensure that MDH guidelines are consistent with the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services.

Amendment No. 1

On page 2, line 7, following "GUIDELINES" add "CONSISTENT WITH THE CENTER FOR MEDICARE AND MEDICAID SERVICES"

For these reasons, LeadingAge Maryland respectfully requests a favorable report with amendment for House Bill 983.

For additional information, please contact Aaron J. Greenfield, 410.446.1992