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In Senior Care and Services*

TO: The Honorable Shane E. Pendergrass, Chair
Members, House Health and Government Operations Committee
The Honorable Neil Parrott

FROM: Danna L. Kauffman
Pamela Metz Kasemeyer

DATE: February 17, 2022

RE: **LETTER OF INFORMATION** – House Bill 216 – *Washington County – Nursing Homes and Assisted Living Programs – Essential Caregivers*

On behalf of the LifeSpan Network, the largest and most diverse senior care provider association in Maryland representing nursing facilities, assisted living providers, continuing care retirement communities, medical adult day care centers, senior housing communities and other home and community-based services, we submit this **letter of information** for House Bill 216.

House Bill 216 is a reintroduction of House Bill 962 from the 2021 Session. During the 2021 Session, the General Assembly passed, and the Governor signed into law House Bill 983: *Nursing Homes – COVID-19 and Other Catastrophic Health Emergencies – Visitation (The Gloria Daytz Lewis Act)*. This emergency bill requires the Maryland Department of Health (MDH), consistent with federal requirements, to develop specified guidelines relating to restrictions on visitation that a nursing home may impose to reduce the spread of COVID-19 or another disease that constitutes a “catastrophic health emergency.” The bill expresses the intent of the General Assembly that, during a catastrophic health emergency issued by the Governor, visitation in nursing homes be prioritized to balance the physical needs of residents with the mental and spiritual needs of the residents and family members from isolation and separation during the emergency.

For the most part, the provisions of House Bill 216 were addressed in House Bill 962, rendering the bill unnecessary. As the COVID-19 pandemic has progressed and more has been learned about the virus, both the federal government and MDH has continued to update guidance through the release of amended Secretary orders and revised survey memos. While some nursing homes were required to restrict visitation during the omicron surge for the safety of residents, it was much less and for shorter durations than previously experienced in the beginning of the pandemic. As a result, we do not believe that House Bill 216 is necessary in light of the previous actions taken by the General Assembly.

For more information call:

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