

TO: General Assembly, State of CT, Committee on Human Services

FROM: Amy Badini, Old Greenwich, CT

RE: H.B. 6634 AN ACT CONCERNING ESSENTIAL SUPPORT PERSONS AND A STATE-WIDE VISITATION POLICY FOR RESIDENTS OF LONG-TERM CARE FACILITIES.

DATE: 25 March 2021

P1/2

Ladies and Gentlemen:

I support the spirit of this bill but it is so vague and non-transparent I cannot even imagine what you will be voting on. Let me first start with the essential support person. The utter confusion is that an essential support person (ESP) is NOT a visitor. It's like saying a CNA is just a visitor. There is a desperate need for a statewide visitation policy but it must not be confused with the development of an essential support person policy. An ESP must follow all regulations that pertain to staff. They must also have access to their residents regardless of a physical health emergency, just like staff. Section 2 (c) -3 MUST separate ESP from visitor restrictions. Again, an ESP is NOT a visitor.

This brings me to my second point, you may or may not be aware of the vast differences in visitation across nursing homes in our state. At one end, there are homes who act humanely and have been doing everything to reunite families. And at the other end, there are homes that are so scared they cannot function properly to even recognize the devastating unintended consequences of locking families out. And DPH has been nowhere to be found to help those families be reunited with their loved ones. Phone calls go unanswered and emails are not returned. This bill says that DPH will create a statewide visitation policy. Shouldn't this bill contain the policy? Additionally, there needs to be explicit language concerning enforcement. For example, when CMS came out with guidance regarding compassionate care visits, there was no statewide enforcement. LTC facilities that are in violation of the CMS policy by not offer compassionate care visits have been getting away with it, as residents suffer, because DPH has not been enforcing the federal policy.

Finally, while I do support the need for two policies—one for the ESP and one for statewide visitation, these policies must be clearly transparent. What exactly may be contained in these policies created by the DPH commissioner? And in the spirit of ESPs the policy created by DPH must be person centered

and permit access to the resident by the ESP despite traditional visitation restrictions because an ESP is NOT a visitor.

Thank you,

Amy Badini  
Old Greenwich, CT

P2/2