



April 22, 2020

The Honorable Lawrence J. Hogan, Jr.
Governor of Maryland
100 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: Testing of Employees and Residents in Nursing Homes and Assisted Living
Communities

Dear Governor Hogan,

On behalf of LifeSpan Network, the Health Facilities Association of Maryland and LeadingAge Maryland, we applaud your dedication and innovative thinking in purchasing an additional 500,000 test kits from South Korea. As you know, employees in nursing homes and assisted living communities are essential employees. These individuals are truly Maryland's unsung heroes in the fight against the novel coronavirus (COVID-19), providing care often with limited test capacity as well as a shortage of personal protective equipment, despite best efforts by the communities to obtain this necessary equipment. Communities are working tirelessly to mitigate the spread in these settings and have been doing so since the onset of this pandemic. But, more needs to be done.

We have already seen and heard instances of asymptomatic employees testing positive for COVID-19, which can then lead to outbreaks in these communities. While we understand the challenges associated with testing asymptomatic individuals, waiting for both employees and residents to develop symptoms almost guarantees additional infections. In these situations, it has been very challenging for providers to proactively manage their communities given that the local and State protocol has been that asymptomatic individuals generally do not warrant testing. This protocol is also true for residents who may not have symptoms but a possible exposure. Consequently, many nursing homes and assisted living communities have been left to contract with labs on their own for testing, a challenging and frustrating endeavor, but one deemed necessary to protect staff and residents.

Therefore, given the addition of the 500,000 test kits, we respectfully request that the State take the additional step to protect nursing home and assisted living employees and residents by implementing a process to perform testing of all employees and residents in nursing homes and assisted living communities.¹ We believe that this is a vital step to assist providers caring for the State's most vulnerable residents in their efforts to implement appropriate measures to stop the spread of this deadly virus. We would welcome the opportunity to work with you on a process to implement this request. Thank you for your continued partnership.

Sincerely,



Kevin Heffner
President & CEO
LifeSpan Network



Joseph DeMattors, Jr.
President & CEO
HFAM



Allison Cibrowoski
President & CEO
LeadingAge MD

cc: The Honorable Robert Neall, Secretary of Health
Patricia Nay, M.D., Director, Office of Health Care Quality
Diane Croghan, Deputy Chief of Staff, Governor's Office
The Honorable William C. Ferguson, IV, President of the Senate
The Honorable Adrienne A. Jones, Speaker of the House of Delegates

¹ On April 17th, Governor Jim Justice (West Virginia) issued a similar Executive Order requiring the West Virginia Division of Health and Human Resources and its Bureau for Public Health, with the assistance of the West Virginia National Guard to "immediately test or cause to be tested all individuals who reside or work in the nursing homes throughout the State, such testing to be conducted pursuant to the terms of this Order, without regard to whether such individuals have or have not been previously tested."