

It's Time for a New Vision for Long-Term Living

Nursing homes failed to protect and care for their residents during the COVID 19 Pandemic. We must do better!

UXBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS, UNITED STATES, July 20, 2020 /EINPresswire.com/ -- It's Time for a New Vision for Long Term Living

By Richard T. Moore



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At least 54,000 residents and workers have died from the Coronavirus at nursing homes and other long-term care facilities for older adults in the United States, according to a New York Times database. That's 43% of all US deaths. As of June 26, the virus has infected more than 282,000 people at some 12,000 facilities. It's way past time to come up with a better way for our senior citizens to age with

dignity!

Given the failure of nursing homes to protect and care for their residents during the COVID 19 Pandemic, the problems of this form of elder care that have existed in these facilities have come dramatically and tragically to the front of the public policy agenda. It's time to DEFUND nursing homes and spend our tax dollars on home care and other ways to allow seniors to stay at home or, at least, in their community. The term, "defund," is meant to suggest a transition of support from congregate living to home and community based supports and services. With so many vacancies caused by COVID, this could begin by moving to single occupancy rooms and consolidation to reduce the number of nursing homes and re-purpose the facilities for another use such as homelessness.

At a minimum, every nursing home resident needs a single room, not one shared with strangers. They should also have the option of taking their meals in other than a congregate setting. Direct care and maintenance workers in nursing homes also need a living wage. At least during the current pandemic and during flu season those workers should be supplied with proper safety protection. However, these changes should be considered as interim measures for the short term. No new skilled nursing facilities should be licensed and no facilities that fail to change to single room occupancy should have their licenses renewed.

Our long-term goal should be to keep seniors out of nursing homes and move as many as possible of current residents back into their communities. Existing skilled nursing facilities could

be utilized for temporary housing for the large number of homeless. This might require some renovations to accommodate homeless families, but it could be done.

Seniors have looked for a different model for years. Those with resources have chosen assisted living, but that's a small percentage of the growing senior population. However, even that model needs to be reconsidered, especially since assisted living is prohibited from providing health care to residents and is currently beyond the financial resources of most seniors.

There are many more good ideas that have been developed to promote aging with dignity. They need to be on the table. Some may require changes in federal law and regulations, while others can be implemented at the state or county levels. These dramatic changes in long-term living will need political power and money, and will be resisted strongly by those with a vested interest in the status quo!

Fortunately, a number of dedicated advocates for seniors have formed a coalition to push for substantial changes in how we help all seniors live with dignity in Massachusetts. It's called the Dignity Alliance Massachusetts (DignityMA5@gmail.com) and these individuals and organizations have come together to re-imagine long term living. More information on how to support or participate in the work of the Alliance will be announced soon.

[Mr. Moore is a former state senator from Uxbridge, Massachusetts, who chaired the Legislature's Committee on Health Care Financing. He is a member of Dignity Alliance Massachusetts (DignityMA5@gmail.com), however, his views are not necessarily the views of the Alliance.]

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