



April 21, 2021

Testimony in opposition to HB21-1172

Dear Chair Lontine and members of the House Health and Insurance Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony in opposition to HB21-1172. LeadingAge Colorado is a statewide trade association representing the continuum of senior living and care providers including nursing homes, assisted living, independent living and affordable senior housing, adult day services centers and the Programs of All-inclusive Care for the Elderly. We are very concerned about the provisions in the bill that prohibit a health care facility from adopting "policies or procedures that prohibit visitation of a patient or resident if the sole reason for the prohibition is to reduce the risk of transmission of a pandemic disease."

Current laws and regulations regarding visitation policies for health care facilities allow for the flexibility to respond to pandemics like COVID-19 to keep residents, visitors, and staff safe. If passed, HB21-1172 would not allow for consideration by public health and infection prevention experts of needed policy changes to reduce the spread of a highly contagious and deadly virus.

Early in the COVID-19 pandemic, we learned that the virus disproportionately impacted elderly and frail adults. Government officials moved swiftly and decisively to protect Colorado's nursing home and assisted living residents from the deadly virus that threatened their doorsteps by restricting visitation. The evidence is clear that nursing home and assisted living outbreaks are tied directly to positivity rates in the surrounding community. Measures were taken to keep the virus out of residential care facilities and protect our most vulnerable from COVID-19.

These restrictions were meant to be temporary, but the virus raged on and we had no idea the devastation and loss we would see over the coming months. Facility staff rallied around residents, providing assistance with virtual visits and celebrations and reconfiguring activities to provide stimulation in a safe way. We know that social isolation experienced by residents during the height of the pandemic has accelerated physical, cognitive, and emotional declines. However, we also know restricting visitation saved the lives of residents and helped to protect our staff.

Now, vaccine coverage is widespread in nursing homes and assisted living residences and visitation policies have changed, allowing for visitors to return and see their loved ones if certain criteria are met.

Again, thank you for your consideration of our concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Deborah Lively".

Deborah Lively
Director of Public Policy and Public Affairs
LeadingAge Colorado

House Health & Insurance

HB21-1172 Hosp Patient Long-term Care Resident Visit Rights

Typed Text of Testimony Submitted

Name, Position, Representing	Typed Text of Testimony
Rae Weber For Self	<p>I support long term care residents visit rights.</p> <p>Having social interaction/support is one of the most important factors for the well being of our seniors and long term care residents. Isolating them and limiting or taking away their right to be near their loved ones is not only cruel, but has been shown by studies for years that it is HARMFUL.</p> <p>Loneliness in Older Persons A Predictor of Functional Decline and Death</p> <p>https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamainternalmedicine/fullarticle/1188033</p> <p>For example, subjective feelings of loneliness are known to be a risk factor for serious functional declines and even death, and converging lines of evidence from multiple cross-national epidemiological studies indicate that social isolation is a major risk factor for morbidity and premature mortality.</p> <p>https://www.nia.nih.gov/about/aging-strategic-directions-research/goal-behavioral-psychological-factors</p> <p>It is essential to the well being of our seniors and long term care residents to have the ability to be with their loved ones and have social interaction. To do otherwise it elder abuse and contributory to death of a vulnerable population.</p>