

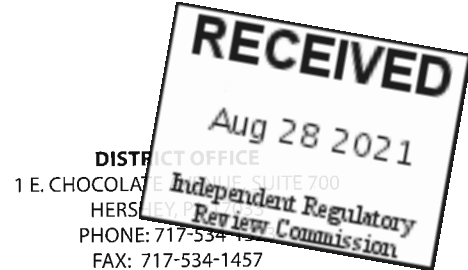
THOMAS L. MEHAFFIE III, MEMBER
106TH LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT

HARRISBURG OFFICE
159B EAST WING, PO BOX 202106
HARRISBURG, PA 17120-2106
PHONE: 717-787-2684
FAX: 717-787-7557

EMAIL: tmehaffie@pahousegop.com
WEB: www.RepMehaffie.com
FACEBOOK: [Facebook.com/RepMehaffie](https://www.facebook.com/RepMehaffie)



House of Representatives
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Harrisburg



COMMITTEES
PROFESSIONAL LICENSURE
CONSUMER AFFAIRS
GAMING OVERSIGHT
GAME AND FISHERIES

August 23, 2021

Alison Beam, Acting Secretary of Health
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
8th Floor West, Health & Welfare Building
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17120

Dear Acting Secretary Beam,

We are writing today in support of the Pennsylvania Department of Health's (DOH) proposed nursing home regulations which would require a minimum of 4.1 hours of resident care per day in every skilled nursing facility in Pennsylvania.

The tragedy which has unfolded in Pennsylvania's nursing homes in the past 18 months revealed profound weaknesses in the state's long-term care system, all of which predate the pandemic. None of those weaknesses is more critical than that of understaffing. Research has shown that adequate staffing is critical to ensure high-quality care and dignity for nursing home residents--yet too many facilities in our commonwealth are understaffed. Chronic understaffing led nursing homes to be unprepared to meet the additional challenges of the pandemic; it also contributes to the poor working conditions and high turnover which have plagued this industry for decades and which further weakened our system's adaptability in the face of COVID-19.

Over 13,000 of Pennsylvania's most vulnerable residents have died in Pennsylvania nursing homes, and we have heard from constituents, family members, and caregivers across the state say loud and clear that this must never be allowed to happen again, and that returning to the status quo is unacceptable. We join with them in applauding the DOH's decision to call for 4.1 hours of care per resident-day, and we urge the Department to maintain this high standard of care in its final regulations. We further call on the DOH to specify that hours of care be defined to include only the nursing staff who provide direct resident care. Finally, given reports that some nursing facilities are evading existing regulations, we call on the DOH to ensure clear enforcement of these regulations and accountability for facilities that fail to provide high-quality care.

We understand that achieving adequate staffing will require investment on the part of the state--both to pay for more staff and to raise wages in the long-term care industry to attract committed caregivers, many of whom have left bedside care due to inadequate pay and poor working conditions. We look forward to working with our colleagues in the legislature and the governor to make sure that these regulations are fully funded. To do so, however, we need to work in partnership with the DOH to ensure that any new funding flows to direct bedside nursing and represents an investment in quality care. Regulations requiring

safe staffing are the first step to this goal, and we join advocates across the state in fully supporting the DOH's proposal to implement 4.1 staffing as soon as possible.

Additionally, we have introduced similar legislation on nursing care in hospital settings, House Bill 106, known as the Patient Safety Act. This bill will address direct care of registered nurses in hospital settings by setting appropriate ratios for Pennsylvania hospitals dependent upon the acuity of patient needs.

Sincerely,



Thomas L Mehaffie
State Representative
106th Legislative District



K.C. Tomlinson
State Representative
18th Legislative District

TLM/KCT/tln