



STATE OF MICHIGAN

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STATE SENATOR
JOHN BIZON, M.D.
ASSISTANT MAJORITY CAUCUS WHIP
19TH DISTRICT

CHAIR, FAMILIES, SENIORS, AND
VETERANS COMMITTEE
VICE CHAIR, HEALTH POLICY AND
HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE
MEMBER, APPROPRIATIONS
COMMITTEE
VICE CHAIR, APPROPRIATIONS
SUBCOMMITTEE ON COMMUNITY
HEALTH/HUMAN SERVICES
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SUBCOMMITTEE ON CAPITAL OUTLAY
MEMBER, APPROPRIATIONS
SUBCOMMITTEE ON UNIVERSITIES
AND COMMUNITY COLLEGES

July 14, 2020

Chairman Vaupel & Members,

I am a practicing physician with over 40 years' experience and the current chair of the Families, Seniors, and Veterans Committee in the Michigan Senate. I wanted to discuss the COVID-19 problems that are affecting our nursing homes. Bridge Magazine has recently stated that we have had over 1900 coronavirus deaths involving nursing home residents. This represents 1 in 3 of the total deaths in the State of Michigan. This number may very well be underreported given the fact that this does not include other long-term care facilities to include homes for the aged, facilities that house the seniors, the disabled, and other assisted living centers.

I support Senate Bill 956 because infected patients can be isolated from the at-risk elderly populations and this would also minimize exposure to staff. In my district, one facility has 8 COVID-19 cases, all 8 cases came to the facility after being transferred there from the hospital. The county the facility is in has 71 cases. However, Executive Order 123 requires testing of all patients and staff on a weekly basis. This testing is unaffordable for the nursing home and time-consuming due to the difficulty finding qualified staff in the rural areas. The staff have expressed significant resistance to the idea of frequent invasive testing. The facility has a significant number of residents with dementia and testing in this population becomes increasingly difficult due to their non-compliance.

Senator Lucido's legislation will fix many of these problems and protect vulnerable seniors and staff. It will allow care workers to focus on the containment of the coronavirus and safety of their workers. We could ensure that PPE is properly allocated to the nursing homes with confirmed COVID-19 cases. Testing would be more focused, this would allow us to obtain test results faster and protect the population while saving money on unneeded tests. I believe a separate, dedicated COVID-19 facility is a sensible solution to minimize further deaths.

Sincerely,

John Bizon, M.D.
State Senator, 19th District
Assistant Majority Caucus Whip