

**Testimony before the House Aging and Long-Term Care Committee
May 28, 2020**

Chairman Ginter, Vice-Chairman Swearingen, Ranking Member Howse and members of the House Aging and Long-Term Care Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Brian Stoy, and I am the President of StoryPoint & Independence Village Senior Living. With me today is Andy Dorr, Vice President of Experience at StoryPoint & Independence Village. Our companies own and or operate 26 Independent Living, Assisted Living, and Memory Care Communities across 6 states totaling over 4, 000 units. Specifically, in the State of Ohio we own and or operate seven independent living, assisted living, and memory care communities . These communities are located in Aurora, Avon Lake, Fairfield, Grove City, Medina, Troy, and Waterville.

On behalf of ourselves and the residents of StoryPoint Senior Living (and our sister Communities, Independence Villages), we would like to propose that the State of Ohio approve visitors in our Communities. The single goal of everyone who works here is to connect with seniors, their families, and each other to enrich their lives. You will find it difficult to compare us to other senior living companies because we are a senior life connections company, dedicated to serving seniors and their families. Our Communities are independent living apartments offering home care support services. We also provide Assisted Living and Memory Care services under our Residential Care Facility licenses.

While we are committed to serving seniors, we are also dedicated to the local economy. Our contributions include the following:

- In 2019 we contributed over \$17 million in total payroll and taxes
- We have created over 780 jobs for the people of Ohio

- Annually, we give back to our local and national charities such as the Alzheimer's Association
- We have been caring for seniors in the State of Ohio and contributing to the local economy for over 20 years

Our state's current executive orders do not consider family visits as essential to Independent Living, Assisted Living and Memory Care Communities. We have the pleasure and privilege of serving one of the greatest generations and we want to request our senior residents' family members be considered as essential visitors to our Communities. Although we have been successful thus far in keeping our residents safe from contracting COVID-19 (Coronavirus), we are noticing other adverse effects caused by the pandemic. Human contact, for seniors, is crucial to their health and well-being. Seniors with dementia are at a higher risk in self isolation, which makes it imperative they have access to the support of loved ones. According to the Alzheimer's Association, research shows that people who are regularly engaged in social interactions and activities can maintain better and healthier cognitive functions, which include a decrease in adverse behavioral reactions. Seniors who are frequently engaged in activities with friends or family, or for those who have someone reliable to interact with often have a more positive outlook than those who do not, which has a direct impact on maintaining a healthy immune system. Participating in hobbies and activities with others can also help seniors find pleasure in life when things get difficult such as now, as their current environment has changed during this pandemic.

We propose that individual family members be given the opportunity to visit their loved ones through a supervised visitation schedule and we want to work with the State of Ohio to open our communities safely for our employees, residents, and family members. Our future supervised visiting protocol would consist of the following:

Pre-visit / coordination

- Add a hand sanitizer station and a covered trash receptacle to each visitation area for safe PPE (personal protective equipment) disposal

- Set designated visiting hours in order to control traffic in and out of the Community, which will minimize exposure
- Limit capacity to meet social distancing guidelines
 - Establish maximum capacity at 50% of fire code
- Schedule appointments in advance to limit congestion
- 15-minute increments (not to exceed 30 minutes)
- Scheduler to add 15 minutes in-between visits to allow time for sanitation
- Upon arrival, all visitors are to pass a pre-screening health questionnaire and temp check to meet State and CDC guidelines
- Where the visit will take place:
 - A designated visiting area near the entrance to meet social distancing guidelines
 - Maintain six-foot distance
 - Supervised by trained staff to support COVID-19 Social Distancing protocols
 - A protective barrier such as tabletop plexiglass shield in between can be provided
 - ✦ <https://www.shoppopdisplays.com/sneeze-guardsplexiglass-shields-retail-barriers.html>
- Signage will be utilized at the visiting areas with specific times to prevent overcrowding and the need for thorough sanitation in-between visits.

The type of PPE which will be provided:

- Visitor – Gloves and disposable face mask
- Resident to wear a face mask
- Visiting areas to be sanitized before and after every visit

Human interaction, along with touch, is how seniors communicate when other forms of communication is lost to them. Putting in place the essential supervised visitation for our senior residents would provide them the human interaction that is so vital to their health. Our resident's average length of stay in our Communities has been 34 months in independent living, 27 months in assisted living, and 12 months in memory care; as you can see, time is of the essence. We have the opportunity to give back to a generation

that gave new meaning to courage, sacrifice, and honor. From military heroes to Community leaders to ordinary citizens, these men and women served our country with valor, then came home and transformed it. We ask that you allow us to provide them one thing that they deserve in their final days – love.

For over 37 years, our Communities have been founded on providing the absolute best care for our residents. Without their trust in us, we would not be here today, and we are extremely grateful for the opportunity to serve them and create truly personalized experiences every single day.

We are exercising an abundance of caution and doing everything in our control to prevent COVID-19 from impacting our Communities. Our 37 years of experience in caring for seniors and our established protocols are in line with those recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and all other national, state, and local governing bodies, as well as local health officials.

We will be partnering with the Batalle Company to utilize their services in sterilizing our N95 masks, if needed, who Governor Dewine supports.

As with every flu and virus strand we have encountered, all StoryPoint and Independence Village communities, are diligent in adhering to the same protocols that have prevented and controlled seasonal illnesses and viruses in our Communities for the past 37 years. While COVID-19 is a new virus the protocols and experience we have are well established and have proved to be valuable in dealing with the pandemic.

Although we are not, and do not provide skilled nursing care, our existing precautionary measures adhere to the recommendations of the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#). We also go beyond these standard protocols. Our measures include:

- ✦ We have defined a preventative maintenance process that has tasked each functional department with disinfecting and sanitizing high traffic areas of our Communities (handrails, elevators, dining room tables/furniture, etc.) three times per day.
- ✦ We utilize CDC-recommended cleaning products for all disinfecting and sanitizing.
- ✦ We will continue to enforce our policies around travel protocols and visitor access, which includes a visitor questionnaire to identify any flu-like symptoms.
- ✦ All resident events scheduled outside the Community and off-site life enrichment outings have been postponed.
- ✦ All Community activities that require an outside partner have been postponed.
- ✦ All business development specialists (outside sales) will be working exclusively outside of the Community, and all events involving other professionals will be held off-site.
- ✦ We have implemented mandatory reinforcement training for all employees on ceasing the spread of germs and viruses.
- ✦ We have temporarily changed our brunch format; we will utilize plated service instead of buffet service.
- ✦ We are accommodating residents who request direct meal delivery to their apartments.
- ✦ We are utilizing our virus-specific menu planning checklist to ensure nutritional adequacy, which includes foods sufficient in vitamins A and C, and in protein.
- ✦ We have distributed a variety of communications on COVID-19 throughout our Communities including symptoms to be aware of and how to prevent the spread of germs.
- ✦ We have formed a designated internal team dedicated to providing routine updates about COVID-19.

- ✦ All employees wear masks. Caregivers wear two masks as well as a face shield and follow sanitizing process when not using.
- ✦ Caregivers have the resident wear a mask, if able, when they are providing care.

In the event COVID-19 impacts our Communities, we have formed a staffing task force of voluntary, specially trained employees to travel to affected Communities to fill any employee gaps. With every seasonal virus and flu we have encountered there is not a way to completely prevent the spread of infectious diseases. In events like the one we are currently experiencing we believe our residents are in the best position to receive the care they need.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before your committee today. Our hope and desire is to be a resource that this committee and the State of Ohio can rely on as we open up and begin life under this new normal. Andy and I are happy to answer any questions you might have.