

## Aging and Long Term Care Committee

Comments of Kenneth Daily, LNHA

How the COVID-19 virus has effected LTC

June 9, 2020

“We cannot change the environment, but we can change our response”, Kenneth Daily

Good morning , Chairman Ginter, Ranking Member Howse, and members of the committee.; My name is Kenneth Daily. I am a licensed nursing home administrator and executive director of Greenville Health and Rehab. I am a 18-year board member of the Ohio Health Care Association and the chair of the Life Safety and Emergency Preparedness Committee for more than a decade. I have spent much of my career working with long term care providers on preparing for emergencies and striving not to let them turn in to disasters. COVID-19 pandemic has tested everything I know.

I wanted to thank you for the opportunity to speak to all of you this morning about my experience with COVID-19. Since early March I have managed one of Ohio’s larger COVID-19 outbreaks at Greenville Health and Rehab. Our outbreak began approximately March 18<sup>th</sup> with one staff member and three residents exhibiting symptoms which within a little more than a month would effect a total of 77 staff and residents and take the lives of 17 residents.

Many want to blame the nursing facilities for not doing enough but that is not the issue. The virus is the issue. It came into the facility without anyone knowing and quickly spread. We locked down the facility by March 9<sup>th</sup>, we all wore masks my March 12<sup>th</sup>, we established the facility’s quarantine unit by March 18<sup>th</sup> and we all donned gowns, gloves and eye shields. It just spread. Both symptomatic and asymptomatic individuals.

After more than a month and 63 positive cases on April 20-22, we tested everyone in the facility to determine who remained positive. What we discovered was 4 asymptomatic staff and 10 asymptomatic residents. The staff were not allowed return for 10 days per CDC guidelines and all of the residents moved to the COVID-19 quarantine unit. This was the turning point for our outbreak. Since then we have not had a single positive staff member and the only thee positive residents tests all of whom had been previously tested positive as much as 5 weeks earlier. As of June 1<sup>st</sup> we are considered COVID-19 free and it only took 75 days.

One of the greatest challenges in the response to COVID-19 was maintaining staffing for the facility. The facility was already in a staffing crunch when the outbreak started. Then more than a dozen staff either quit or refused to come to work at the beginning of the outbreak. Then at the height of the outbreak there were nearly 30 staff who were

positive and out of work recuperating. The care challenges were immense. By early April there were only three of us in our daily morning meeting. All care staff who were not ill worked around the clock. At one point, I realized that I had not seen my management nurses (DON and ADON) for more than two weeks given they worked every evening or night shift.

The COVID-19 is a serious threat to senior living communities and appears that it will remain so for the foreseeable future. From my perspective these are the things that we must focus on in the near term to survive:

- Controlling the risk of out outbreaks and/or community spread. This must be a multi-faceted approach including education, emergency preparedness training and honest non-judgmental dialogue among all stakeholders to ensure the health and safety of long term care consumers and staff.
- Financial support by Ohio Medicaid. It is truly a shame that the State of Ohio has failed to recognize the costs of COVID-19 on LTC providers and have failed to provide any additional funding to aide us in the fight of this pandemic.
- Staff and resident testing is free and readability available so that when there are concerns and/or cases facilities can respond rapidly and effectively. Last week we participated in the State's staff testing program and the results were all negatives supporting the fact that our outbreak has ended.
- Person protective equipment (PPE) is readily available at reasonable cost. All of us have faced horrendous increases in PPE costs. Even when you could find it, in some cases it was too expensive. The state must assist all providers in establishing supply lines and accessing PPE for any future outbreaks.
- Continuing supporting the County Health Departments. What I experienced from Darke County has been truly amazing. They have supported us with PPE, advice and just plain kindness. These frontline government officials are key to the success in the future.

All of this comes down to working to stop the fear of the virus. This virus is very different than any before. The fear is crazy. I love what I do but now every day I dread hearing those words, "so-in-so is positive for COVID-19". We along with our Medical Director continue to closely monitor resident care and any changes in condition. Our priority is to main health and safety for all the residents and the staff and we continue to serve the 50 residents left residing at the facility. At the beginning of the pandemic our census was 81. The virus is different and the way we operate is going to be different in the future.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to speak to you this morning. I will be happy to answer any of your questions.

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