

I am writing to you with deep concerns about the loneliness and isolation experienced by elders in nursing homes during the COVID-19 pandemic. Thank you for drafting of Ohio House Bill 120, the Compassionate Caregivers Act, and I am in complete support of this bill. I realize that adjustments may need to be made in this current climate to ensure the health and safety of all people involved.

Due to my own family's background and because I work closely with nursing homes to help people share their life stories, this issue is very important to me. People of all ages can experience "failure to thrive" and none of us can imagine the mental anguish that would be possible when human beings are unable to have contact with other human beings, especially when they are denied access to their own closest family members or other loved ones.

NBC News story --

[https://www.nbcnews.com/video/the-hidden-covid-19-crisis-elderly-people-are-dying-from-isolation-](https://www.nbcnews.com/video/the-hidden-covid-19-crisis-elderly-people-are-dying-from-isolation-96091717781?cid=sm_npd_nn_fb_ma&fbclid=IwAR3lIU5-L6dOgSlb45ogK9NHmDFYPluzBHjyMfgB-2Ww36e23SdT-ayTMQI)



[96091717781?cid=sm\\_npd\\_nn\\_fb\\_ma&fbclid=IwAR3lIU5-L6dOgSlb45ogK9NHmDFYPluzBHjyMfgB-2Ww36e23SdT-ayTMQI](https://www.nbcnews.com/video/the-hidden-covid-19-crisis-elderly-people-are-dying-from-isolation-96091717781?cid=sm_npd_nn_fb_ma&fbclid=IwAR3lIU5-L6dOgSlb45ogK9NHmDFYPluzBHjyMfgB-2Ww36e23SdT-ayTMQI)

As a member of the group Ohio Caregivers for Compromise, I have heard and read the cries of the family members who are also deeply suffering, as they cannot respond to the needs of a loved one with dementia through the window. They watch their parent or grandparent die before their eyes, without being able to go to them. Some people say, "Well then bring them home." This is easier said than done for thousands of people across Ohio. Family members are unable to handle the complex care needs – without the help of the nursing home, assisted living, or memory care. They are sad that they do not have the financial resources, or the equipment, or the skills to bring a loved one home. As we reach December 2020, they are sitting outside in the cold, trying to see if mom or dad is doing okay.

This hurts the nursing home or other care community deeply too. The staff is doing all they can to meet the person's physical needs, but they cannot be "all things to all people." The leadership and direct care workers of nursing homes, assisted living, and other communities will not deny that family members have been playing key roles to help their loved ones with emotional support. It is a team; it is a partnership. It is not something the community is used to handling alone, without a compassionate caregiver available to bring comfort, joy, and touch.

The Greatest Generation needs compassionate caregivers by their bedside. Please act on this. Thank you!

Sincerely,

Beth Sanders  
Founder & CEO  
LifeBio  
937-303-4574  
[bsanders@lifebio.com](mailto:bsanders@lifebio.com)

I am going to share additional three additional ideas here:

- 1) **Designate a secondary door on the building that is for VISITATION only**, and allow for a change in the building evacuation plan or fire regulations (without delay) so that this door can be used as a “visiting booth” and bring family members inside out of the cold to see and hear their loved ones better. They can “touch” through the glass.
- 2) **Fund a communication campaign** that will help family members of nursing homes to know that they CAN bring their loved one home and have funding through Medicaid for “at home” care. Can the money be re-directed for this person for home care vs. nursing home care? If this is an option, please make sure people know that their hands are not tied. Can they get equipment, people, etc. to help them remove their loved one from a nursing home?
- 3) **Look to the future** and adopt a program such as FreedomCare that is offered in New York state (do we have anything like this) <https://www.freedomcareny.com/> This allows people on Medicaid to HIRE a family caregiver to help them while they live at home. People want to live at home as long as possible. Let’s try to help people stay OUT of nursing homes in the future. With Medicaid costing \$80,000 a year per person, there must be a better, less expensive way.

