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Dignity Alliance Massachusetts Applauds White House's Proposed Nursing Home Reforms

March 1, 2022— (Boston, MA)—The COVID-19 pandemic exposed longstanding problems in nursing homes that are being addressed through systemic reform at the federal level. Yesterday, the White House, proclaiming that “All people deserve to be treated with dignity and respect,” announced important initiatives that can improve the safety, care, and quality of life for millions of vulnerable nursing home residents, now and in the future.

The pandemic took a devastating toll on nursing home residents nationally, and in particular in Massachusetts – more than 5,700 nursing home resident deaths account for about 30% of the state’s COVID-19 deaths, even though nursing home residents comprise less than half of 1% of the Commonwealth’s population.

A White House statement details key reforms that aim to protect vulnerable residents, assert the dignity of residents and their caregivers, and hold nursing homes accountable when they fail to follow federal requirements.

These important initiatives include:

Ensuring taxpayer dollars support nursing homes that provide safe, adequate, and dignified care by implementing safe staffing levels, addressing the misuse of antipsychotic drugs, and more, including:

1. Enhancing accountability and oversight;
2. Increasing transparency of facility ownership and finances and a range of improvements to Care Compare, a website to help you pick a nursing home;
3. Creating pathways to good-paying jobs with the free and fair choice to join a union; and
4. Ensuring pandemic and emergency preparedness in nursing homes.

“This is the biggest and most positive news for nursing home residents in the 35 years since the Nursing Home Reform Act was established,” said Arlene Germain, executive director of the Massachusetts Advocates for Nursing Home Reform and a co-founder of Dignity Alliance Massachusetts. “For years, we have watched as an increasingly sophisticated and corporatized industry has, too often, cut back on staffing and essential services to maximize profits. We are profoundly grateful to the President for taking these critical actions for the safety, well-being, and dignity of vulnerable residents, their families, caregivers, and American taxpayers, who foot the bill for most nursing home care.”

Dignity Alliance Massachusetts is a statewide coalition of individuals and organizations advocating for older adults, persons with disabilities, and their caregivers. We came together two years ago during the initial days of the COVID-19 pandemic in an attempt to strengthen nursing home regulations and protect the most vulnerable Massachusetts citizens—frail older adults living in unsafe facilities.

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