

Clark, Sarah

From: Senator Tony Hwang <senatorhwang@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, June 4, 2020 8:43 PM
To: Rall, Nicole; Clark, Sarah
Subject: Fwd: Statement

Statement emailed from AV Harris for Interim CT DPH Commissioner Griffin

Tony Hwang
State Senator
28th Senate District
CT General Assembly

LEGAL NOTICE: Certain communications or records received by or sent from this electronic mail account may be subject to public disclosure pursuant to the Connecticut Freedom of Information Act, Conn. Gen. Stat. § 1-200 et seq.

----- Forwarded message -----

From: Harris, Av <Av.Harris@ct.gov>
Date: Thu, Jun 4, 2020 at 6:38 PM
Subject: Statement
To: Tony.Hwang@cga.ct.gov <Tony.Hwang@cga.ct.gov>

Hi Tony,

Feel free to read this to your audience.

Good evening residents of the Fairfield region period I am so sorry that I could not join you for this important Facebook live discussion period since becoming acting Commissioner of the Department of public health, I have been immersed in all things public-health, including learning about the extraordinary team working very hard at the Department of Public health to respond to the most serious pandemic any of us have seen in our lifetimes.

We have all been working very hard together in combination with several state agencies under unified command during this public health emergency with the leadership of governor Lamont. we are also working with our legislators as partners to make sure residents of every Connecticut city and town have as much information as they can and we solve individual problems and get questions answered as quickly as possible.

Nursing homes have been very challenged during the COVID-19 pandemic with issues such as staffing, staff training, making sure there is enough personal protective equipment, and infection control procedures. Today we have reported more than 4,000 total Connecticut residents have died as a result of COVID-19. More than 2,500 of those have been residents of nursing homes. Nursing home resident are the most vulnerable to this virus and in an enclosed residential setting, the virus can spread very quickly.

The Department of Public health is making every effort to make sure nursing homes are properly cohorting or clustering nursing home residents together who are has tested positive for COVID-19. We have also worked as a team in collaboration with other state agencies to establish COVID-19 recovery facilities that served as places where people could be discharged from hospital to recover while they are still covered positive period these facilities have worked well and there have been many who have recovered and then been discharged to their original nursing home of residence.

Combined teams of inspectors from the Department of public health and the Connecticut National Guard have made over 1,000 in person visits to inspect nursing homes for infection control, staffing and overall quality of life during the pandemic. That means they have visited every nursing home in Connecticut at least four times.

We know the restrictions on visitation are particularly difficult for family members living on the outside as their loved ones are inside the nursing homes. To make virtual visitation easier, the Department of Public health purchased more than 800 iPads that were distributed prior to Mother's Day weekend in order for families to be able to have FaceTime visits with their loved ones on the inside.

We have also issued a directive to Connecticut nursing homes that outside visitation with families and loved ones is permitted, if properly done through social distancing and families and residents are wearing personal protective equipment such as masks. Those can be arranged between the families and the particular nursing home.

As we move forward in this pandemic, we are constantly evaluating and re-evaluating what policies we have put in place in order to protect the health of nursing home residents and staff and keep people safe and healthy. Part of quality-of-life of nursing home care is having access to loved ones and family members on the outside. We are taking a look at this very difficult question and are evaluating if it will be possible to loosen some restrictions on visitation in the future as the reopening of the Connecticut economy continues. This is not an easy question to answer. There are many complicating factors, and again our primary concern is the health and safety of a nursing home residents and staff.

As we move forward, I hope to be able to communicate about these issues directly with you in the near future and please know that my team and I are always accessible to you, always through your state representatives, local health directors, and many other advocates. This has been an extraordinarily difficult and challenging time for all of us, and we are all in this together. I thank you for giving me the opportunity to address you and hopefully next time it will be in person. Thank you Senator Hwang for organizing this important forum.

Av Harris
Director of Communications and Government Relations
Connecticut Department of Public Health
860-509-7106 ofc
860-250-8391 cell
av.harris@ct.gov