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**NEW LAW TO ESTABLISH VISITATION PROTOCOLS FOR
LONG-TERM CARE SETTINGS**

State Senators, Delegates from Northern Virginia among patrons of critical legislation

[McLean, VA] October 30, 2020 – Assisted living facilities and nursing homes have been on the frontlines of the COVID-19 crisis. With almost half of residents living with Alzheimer's disease or another dementia, the communal nature of these settings, combined with the older age and underlying chronic conditions of most residents, make those living there extremely vulnerable to the virus. In fact, an estimated 40% of total COVID-19 deaths in the United States have been long-term care residents or workers.

As a result, many long-term care settings closed their doors to visitors – creating an especially difficult time for caregivers and families unable to see their loved ones in person. In turn, the ensuing effects of social isolation on residents with dementia have had a profound effect on their well-being, potentially causing more rapid cognitive decline.

Carter Harrison, Senior Director of Virginia Public Policy for the Alzheimer's Association, has been working closely with state legislators to address these concerns through a key piece of legislation, HB5041 and SB5042, recently signed into law by Virginia Governor Ralph Northam.

"We are pleased with the support received from the General Assembly and Governor Northam for these critical issues," said Harrison. "The two bills, led by chief patrons Senator Jennifer Kiggans and Delegate Christopher Head, and now signed into law by the Governor, will help address the issue of social isolation in long-term care facilities by requiring a process to ensure safe visitation for families and caregivers of residents in nursing facilities and hospice facilities."

The legislation requires the State Board of Health to establish protocols related to safe nursing home, hospice, and nursing facility visits. Directives for those requesting entry to a long-term care setting include required screening for symptoms, including temperature checks; denial of entry to those with symptoms; face coverings for visitors; and social distancing at least six feet between persons.

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Long-term care settings would provide instructional signage throughout the facility; cleaning and disinfecting of high frequency touched surfaces in the facility and designated visitation areas; use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for designated staff; separate areas dedicated for COVID-19 care; and resident and staff testing conducted as required.

Joining the chief patrons on this critical legislation were General Assembly legislators representing the Northern Virginia region:

- State Senators Jennifer Boysko (SD 33), Barbara Favola (SD 31), and Jeremy McPike (SD 29); and
- State Delegates Mark Cole (HD 88), Mark Keam (HD 35) Dave LaRock (HD 33), Mark Levine (HD 45), Kathy Tran (HD 42), Vivian Watts (HD 39), and Michael Webert (HD 18)

The bills are effective October 21 and the regulations are currently being considered in a Regulatory Advisory Committee. For more information about this and other Alzheimer's and dementia issues before the Virginia General Assembly, contact Karen Garner at khgarner@alz.org.

For tips on caring for a loved one with dementia during COVID-19, visit [alz.org/covid19](https://www.alz.org/covid19) or call the Alzheimer's Association free 24/7 Helpline at 800.272.3900.

About the Alzheimer's Association

The Alzheimer's Association leads the way to end Alzheimer's and all other dementia – by accelerating global research, driving risk reduction and early detection, and maximizing quality care and support. Our vision is a world without Alzheimer's and all other dementia®. Visit [alz.org](https://www.alz.org) or call 800.272.3900.

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