



Maine Health Care Association

STATEMENT ON NURSING HOME CLOSURES

September 1, 2021

Maine has lost approximately a dozen nursing homes over the past 10 years, each closure with its own set of determining factors. Out of 93 nursing homes in Maine, three have recently announced closure. While the causes for closure may be unique to each home, every facility faces similar underlying challenges.

In general, Maine's nursing homes have been influenced by a perfect storm. We have mostly small nursing homes that serve large numbers of MaineCare beneficiaries. Our residents require a higher level of care than in most other states. Historically, MaineCare rates haven't kept pace with increases in wage and benefit costs and COVID-19 has exacerbated the pre-existing workforce crisis.

The closure of a nursing home has a devastating impact on a local community, creating job loss, and reduced access to long-term care services close to home. Today, finding placement may be quite difficult as providers grapple with decreased capacity and staffing due to COVID-19.

MHCA has provided state government with timely long term care updates throughout the public health emergency. We've underscored the challenges of funding, staffing, and access to care. We are grateful for the Legislature and Administration's appropriation of \$120M in response to those challenges. The action was taken in June but those funds have not yet been distributed to facilities. Now, we are seeing the additional impacts of COVID-19 fatigue, the rise of the Delta variant, and a provider community stretched thin. MHCA commends our caregivers who continue to stay the course despite the challenges.

The pandemic is not over for these facilities. Maintaining stringent infection control protocols, conducting regular testing, and implementing mandatory vaccination are all important strategies in the fight against COVID-19. MHCA is concerned that without additional financial support, we will see an acceleration in nursing home closures. Today, our message to State government is to expedite the release of these emergency funds that were approved in a bipartisan manner by the Legislature and this Administration.

While MHCA cannot comment on individual provider closures, our thoughts turn to the impact on long term care employees, residents and their families. These are never decisions that are made quickly or lightly and are not without significant lasting impact on Maine people and our communities.

-MHCA is a non-profit trade association representing 92 of Maine's 93 nursing homes. Statement in full or part, may be attributed to: Angela Cole Westhoff, MHCA President and CEO.