



J. Kevin Stitt
Officer of the Governor
State of Oklahoma

March 9, 2021

The Honorable Elizabeth Richter
Acting Administrator
Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Acting Administrator Richter,

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the state of Oklahoma has worked diligently to protect its most vulnerable populations inside the 400 state facilities funded and/or governed by the Center for Medicare/Medicaid Services (CMS).

From proactive facility-wide cleaning, free access to Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and prioritized testing of all residents/staff, federal data shows what we know to be true; that Oklahoma has led the way in providing resources to these citizens to mitigate the risk posed by this insidious virus. In similar fashion, Oklahoma continues to lead with per capita vaccine distribution rates consistently in the top 10 for the entire nation, with 1/4th of our 4,000,000 residents receiving their first dose of vaccine.

As we approach the one year anniversary of detecting the first case of COVID-19 in our state, we have identified an issue among our nursing facility residents that, in many cases can be just as deadly as COVID-19; the continued isolation of some of our 25,000+ nursing/skilled nursing facility residents due to often static visitation policies in state facilities overseen and funded by CMS.

As the governor of the state of Oklahoma, I implore you to change the current policy guidance on visitation and mandate that access to a resident in these facilities by their loved ones is a priority of CMS as it is to my administration. We are in the midst of transition to a "new normal", and this includes enhancing visitation opportunities for our most vulnerable residents.

Thank you for your time today, and God bless.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. Kevin Stitt".

J. Kevin Stitt
Governor