



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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**Amid COVID-19 Pandemic, Skilled Nursing Facility Caregivers  
Serve Wisconsin’s Most Vulnerable Citizens on the Frontlines**

**(MADISON)** – As the Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) begins to release the names of nursing facilities who are currently caring for residents and/or have staff with COVID-19, the leaders of Wisconsin’s two long-term care provider associations urge the public and the media to recognize the important services these facilities provide that are fundamental to the lives of the people they serve, their families, and our communities.

On Monday, DHS will begin publishing the names of nursing facilities with positive cases of COVID-19 in their buildings. This action comes despite serious concerns expressed by LeadingAge Wisconsin and the Wisconsin Health Care Association and the Wisconsin Center for Assisted Living (WHCA/WiCAL) over how this listing might be presented by DHS and interpreted by the public and media. The associations stress that inclusion of a facility on this list is not a measure of the quality of care offered by the facility.

“COVID-19 is an insidious virus and can be found in most areas of the State. Even the very best nursing homes may experience COVID-19, and positive identification is not an indication of the quality of care offered by the facility,” said John Sauer, CEO/President of LeadingAge Wisconsin. “To be clear, the mere presence of COVID-19 does not indicate a poorly run facility, but more likely represents a facility that is actively aiding in the fight within this public health crisis. These facilities and their staff on the frontlines should be commended and deserve our continued support. The DHS list is just a list. It does not begin to tell the story behind the love and compassionate care provided by Wisconsin’s nursing facilities.”

“Wisconsin’s frontline caregivers in our state’s long-term care facilities are heroes who work hard every day to protect the health and safety of our state’s most frail and vulnerable population. Their tireless work has gone on for months despite facing tremendous challenges, including 500 percent increases in the cost of personal protective equipment and double their workforce costs,” said John Vander Meer, President & CEO of WHCA/WiCAL. “Wisconsin’s skilled nursing providers have been proactive in informing their local public health departments, their residents, residents’ family members, their employees, and state officials since the beginning of this public health emergency. These caregiver heroes deserve our respect and support for the work they do.”

Vander Meer and Sauer said the presence of COVID-19 in a facility may reflect: Efforts by the facility to admit persons with COVID-19 from the community; the results of greater access to COVID-19 testing for residents and staff; and the fact that some residents and staff may be asymptomatic and may have unknowingly brought the virus into the facility.

“We look forward to working with all state leaders to ensure that Wisconsin’s LTC provider community receives the resources that they need including personal protective equipment and additional state and federal aid,” Sauer and Vander Meer said. “Every day, these organizations are taking extra measures to aggressively prevent and mitigate the spread, as they deliver compassionate care under the most challenging of circumstances.”