

Board of County Commissioners

Doris I. Herringshaw, Ed.D. Craig LaHote Dr. Theodore H. Bowlus



September 9, 2021

The Honorable Robert E. Latta
United States Representative

Dear Representative Latta,

We write to you with great concern for the order issued by the President of the United States that all employees of nursing homes must be vaccinated or these facilities will lose Medicare and Medicaid funding.

By strictly enforcing COVID-19 protocols, Wood Haven Health Care has incurred just 3 COVID cases since the pandemic began. We are very proud of this fact! Over the past several months we have worked with our Administrator at Wood Haven to offer incentives to employees to get vaccinated. We offered \$750 to every employee if we could reach a goal of 75% of all employees. Ultimately, we reached 73%.

The primary difficulty at Wood Haven, and likely at most other nursing homes, is the inability to attract and keep staff. The stress of the pandemic is evident. The overall labor market is such that people who would normally seek employment at Wood Haven are going elsewhere because they can be paid significantly more and avoid the stress of working in a medical setting. We have taken many steps to provide additional pay to Wood Haven staff but this is very much limited because of the strict financial controls in place through Medicare and Medicaid.

We recently heard a quote from Evan Shulman, Director, Divisions of Nursing Homes for CMS who stated that the mandate will "level the playing field" by placing all skilled nursing facilities on the same footing for attracting staff. The reality is the mandate will force employees who do not wish to be vaccinated to leave nursing home employment, exacerbating the employee shortage we are experiencing today. These are employees we simply cannot afford to lose if Wood Haven is to remain viable.

We are asking for your help. There must be a better way forward than mandating vaccinations for every nursing home employee. Through Medicare and Medicaid the federal government controls nearly every aspect of nursing homes. The people we serve need our help. The vaccine mandate with the threat of lost Medicare and Medicaid funding will not help the people we serve.

Let's work together to find a better way. We look forward to hearing from you.

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS,
WOOD COUNTY, OHIO

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Craig LaHote, Vice-President

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