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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2021

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A N A C T

RELATING TO HEALTH AND SAFETY - RIGHTS OF NURSING HOME PATIENTS

Introduced By: Senator Frank S. Lombardi

Date Introduced: January 11, 2021

Referred To: Senate Health & Human Services

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Chapter 23-17.5 of the General Laws entitled "Rights of Nursing Home
2 Patients" is hereby amended by adding thereto the following section:

3 **23-17.5-32. Access to nursing homes and long-term care facilities for essential**
4 **caregivers during declared emergency.**

5 (a) For purposes of this section, the following words and phrases shall have the meanings
6 given to them in this subsection unless the context clearly indicates otherwise:

7 (1) "Declaration of disaster emergency" means a disaster emergency declared by the
8 governor pursuant to § 30-15-9.

9 (2) "Essential caregiver" means an individual, whether a family member or friend of a
10 resident of a nursing home or long-term care facility, who is designated by the resident or appointed
11 by an individual with decision-making authority for the resident to provide physical or emotional
12 support to the resident during a declaration of disaster emergency.

13 (3) "Nursing home or long-term care facility" means a facility licensed by the department
14 of health, including a long-term care facility, a skilled nursing facility, an assisted living facility, a
15 personal care home or an older adult daily living center.

16 (b) The department of health, shall establish rules and regulations to allow a resident of a
17 nursing home or long-term care or an individual with decision-making authority for the resident to
18 designate an individual as the resident's essential caregiver during a declaration of disaster
19 emergency. An essential caregiver shall meet the necessary qualifications to enter the long-term

1 care facility to provide in-person physical or emotional support to a resident of a nursing home or
2 long-term care facility in accordance with the rules and regulations established pursuant to this
3 section. The rules and regulations shall include, but not be limited to, all of the following:

4 (1) Safety measures for an essential caregiver, including, but not limited to, restrictions on
5 travel, enhanced testing for communicable diseases and the necessary safety equipment required to
6 protect the health and safety of the residents of the nursing home or long-term care facility.

7 (2) Procedures to replace an essential caregiver due to necessary circumstances, including
8 illness or death of the essential caregiver.

9 (3) A duration, not to exceed thirty (30) days, when a nursing home or long-term care
10 facility may enter a lock-down phase for the purpose of establishing safety measures for residents
11 of the nursing home or long-term care facility and the essential caregivers.

12 (c)(1) A nursing home or long-term care facility may establish additional safety
13 requirements to protect the residents of the nursing home or long-term care facility if the
14 requirements meet all of the following criteria:

15 (i) The requirements are directly linked to a declaration of disaster emergency.

16 (ii) The requirements are not so burdensome and onerous as to substantially prevent an
17 essential caregiver from being able to physically or emotionally support a resident of the nursing
18 home or long-term care facility in person.

19 (2) A nursing home or long-term care facility may suspend access to the nursing home or
20 long-term care facility for an essential caregiver who violates the rules and regulations established
21 under subsection (b) of this section, and the long-term care facility shall allow the resident, or an
22 individual with decision-making authority for the resident, to immediately designate a replacement
23 essential caregiver.

24 (d) A nursing home or long-term care facility may require an essential caregiver to provide
25 personal protective equipment for himself or herself or assume the cost of the personal protective
26 equipment provided by the facility to allow the essential caregiver to provide in-person physical or
27 emotional support.

28 (e) The provisions of this section shall apply for the period commencing fifteen (15) days
29 after a declaration of disaster emergency and until sixty (60) days after the termination or expiration
30 of the declaration of disaster emergency by executive order, proclamation or operation of law.

1 SECTION 2. This act shall take effect upon passage.

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EXPLANATION
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
OF

A N A C T

RELATING TO HEALTH AND SAFETY - RIGHTS OF NURSING HOME PATIENTS

1 This act would require the department of health to promulgate rules and regulations
2 providing for the designation of essential caregivers to provide in-person physical or emotional
3 support to a resident of a nursing home or long-term care facility during the period of fifteen (15)
4 days after the declaration of disaster emergency and until sixty (60) days after the termination of
5 the declaration of disaster emergency.

6 This act would take effect upon passage.

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