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Protecting Our Most Vulnerable

While our country continues to deal with COVID-19, there has been a lot of talk about protecting our most vulnerable population, the elderly, but little talk about their mental health and the quality of life of these individuals during these trying times.

Last week I sent a letter to our Wisconsin Department of Health (DHS) Secretary Designee Andrea Palm asking her to reevaluate policies regarding visitations at long-term care facilities. I have heard from many constituents that they want to keep the elderly members of our communities safe but they are suffering from being all alone for so long. With many of these individuals having cognitive issues, they don't understand why their loved ones have stopped seeing them all of a sudden. Our seniors deserve to have some comfort towards the end of their lives because their mental health is just as important as their physical health.

There are many options that could be looked at such as promoting outdoor visitations, coming up with safe visitations indoors or how Minnesota classifies "essential caregivers" just over the border from us. Many of the people who would be considered "essential caregivers" are loved ones who make sure their parents or family members take their medicine and sometimes even eat.

Winter is coming sooner rather than later, so standing outside to look into a window is not going to be enough or even realistic. We need a viable solution to allow visitation while also continuing to be safe.

Additionally, in the letter I sent I encouraged the use of the CARES Act money that was given to Governor Evers to be used to provide more testing at these facilities, personal protective equipment (PPE) and to be used to further protect our most vulnerable population. These people fought for our country, raised us and contributed greatly to our local communities so they deserve to be safe and to have peace of mind knowing their family members are there for them during these difficult times.

As always, feel free to contact my office with questions, comments, or concerns.

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