

For Immediate Release

Name of Press Contact: Mikko Cook

March 3, 2021

Phone: 347-420-4468

Email: mikko@essentialcaregiverscoalition.org

LONG TERM CARE RESIDENTS REMAIN IN LOCKDOWN AFTER ONE YEAR; 15 STATES BAN TOGETHER TO CREATE “BANNIVERSARY”, RESTORE RIGHTS

March 3, 2021 - March 8-13, 2021, grassroots advocacy groups the Essential Caregivers Coalition, Caregivers for Compromise, FACE for Seniors, and Nursing Home Lives Matter, with thousands of members across 15 states, will be participating in the “Banniversary”; a week of events coordinated to recognize the one year anniversary of the lockdown of long term care residents. Utilizing the slogan, “Isolation Kills, Too!” groups hope to bring awareness to the current rising death toll of residents in residential healthcare facilities due to “failure to thrive” as a result of social isolation.

On March 13 of 2020, under executive order, each state governor restricted visitation for all long term care facilities (skilled nursing, assisted living, skilled mental health, pediatric subacute centers, etc.). One year later, residents of all ages and abilities in long term care facilities continue to live in lockdown and suffer from being kept apart from their families. Tragically, so many have died alone while in lockdown. These events will serve as a call to action for officials to re-issue the visitation guidance in light of the vaccine and support the federal designation of an essential caregiver. In addition, memorials are planned to honor the lives lost during this tragic year.

While every state will be participating differently, various coordinated online and in person events are planned, including the “Isolation Anniversary in Long Term Care” webinar on March 10 at 7pm EST, featuring a conversation with Evan Shulman, Director for the Division of Nursing Homes in the Quality, Safety and Oversight Group within the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), Toby Edelman, Senior Policy Attorney with the Center for Medicare Advisory (CMA) and Dr. Candace Kemp, Professor at Georgia State University and Fellow of the Gerontological Society of America. This conversation will focus on why families are more than just visitors, review the rights of residents in long term care and address the issue of the efficacy of the vaccine and its impact on visitation.

“In my state of New Jersey, each week there are more announcements of openings of restaurants, bars, gyms, churches, even sports arenas, all due to the positive case count dropping and the availability of the vaccines,” said Bill Borrelle, founder of FACE for Seniors. “Why has long-term care been left out? The greatest proportion of vaccines have been administered there,

and those residents are now protected. If preventing death was the reason for keeping family out before the vaccines, what is the reason now?"

Through weekly calls to action, group leaders have mobilized thousands of residents and family members across the nation to raise funds, mail letters for a yellow envelope campaign and purchase signs in anticipation of this moment for change.

“Caregivers for Compromise is excited to join forces with other national caregiver groups to advocate for so many still in isolation in long term care,” said Mary Daniel, founder. “Together, our voices speak louder for those unable to speak for themselves.”

The week kicks off with the arrival of thousands of letters filled with personal stories and demands for change mailed in yellow envelopes on the desks of the CDC, CMS, state and local officials. Additionally, emails demanding the reissuing of guidance around visitation with consideration of the vaccine will be sent out. Across cities in various states hundreds of “Isolation Kills, Too!” and “Restore Resident Rights in Long Term Care” lawn signs will pop up for a day and then travel to a new location. On March 12, groups will gather in front of their state capitols to speak with legislators and show support for current bills in legislation pertaining to the establishment of an essential caregiver. Finally, on the year anniversary, March 13, families will attend vigils to read the names of those that have passed, share stories of their loss and sit in silence together.

“When it comes to visitation, every state, every county, even every facility is applying different rules,” said Mikko Cook, co-founder of the Essential Caregivers Coalition. “However, one constant remains true: all long term care residents are still suffering in isolation after a year. It is time for their rights to be restored and measures taken so this never happens again.”

Current states participating in the Banniversary include: CA, CT, FL, IL, KY, NC, ND, NJ, NY, PA, TN, TX and WV, with more signing on each day. To learn more about the campaign and to see a schedule of events planned, please visit: www.isolationkills.org.

Name of Press Contact: Mikko Cook

March 3, 2021

Phone: 347-420-4468

Email: mikko@essentialcaregiverscoalition.org