



HENRY McMASTER  
GOVERNOR

August 21, 2020

Mr. Mark Elam  
Chairman  
South Carolina Board of Health and Environmental Control  
2600 Bull Street  
Columbia, SC 29201

Dear Chairman Elam,

Restricting visitation to our state's nursing homes and assisted living facilities in March was a heartbreaking necessity. It was the most effective way to contain the spread of COVID-19 and to save the lives of our state's elderly and at-risk residents.

As expected, this separation and isolation has caused loneliness, depression, stress and anxiety among residents, and has frustrated those worried about a parent, grandparent or other loved ones' well-being.

Since that time, experience and resources have accelerated our efforts. On August 10, 2020, I issued Executive Order 2020-53 which continued earlier directives of June 26, July 11 and July 26, 2020, for the Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC) "to develop guidelines for nursing homes and assisted living facilities to allow for or facilitate limited visitation for immediate family members and to communicate the same to such facilities." You will recall that on July 2, 2020, it became necessary to postpone releasing the visitation guidelines due to concerns about the rising rate of infection and hospitalization.

We are committed to protecting the physical, mental and emotional health of our elderly and at-risk people - and their loved ones. Although no policy or procedure can eliminate all possibility of risk, it is clear that the time has come to expand current rules to allow in-person visitation by immediate family members, loved ones or caregivers.

Vigorous testing, monitoring, scheduling and communication must be involved in this effort, and facilities must remain in strict compliance with DHEC's guidelines. Comprehensive collaboration and enforcement will be necessary. Innovation is encouraged.

Mr. Mark Elam  
August 21, 2020  
Page Two

I ask that DHEC promptly issue up-to-date visitation guidelines providing all direction and information deemed necessary to resume - or require resumption if necessary - in-person visitation with residents in nursing homes and assisted living facilities.

Yours very truly,



Henry McMaster

cc: SC DHEC Board  
Mr. Marshall Taylor, Acting Director, DHEC