Wayne County Commission seeks to boost nursing home inspections

With Wayne County nursing home residents making up a significant number of Michigan’s COVID-19 patients and fatalities, the Wayne County Commission has called on the state to increase inspections of county nursing home and nursing care facilities.

“There has been a lack of inspections by state officials in the past and when COVID-19 hit, I heard of more cases of negligence,” said Commissioner Al Haidous (D-Wayne), who co-sponsored the resolution with Commission Chair Alisha Bell (D-Detroit). “We need to do something so these facilities follow procedures and support the senior citizens who live there and lead healthy lives.”

Statistics compiled by the Wayne County Department of Health, Human & Veterans Services show that more than 10 percent of all county COVID-19 patients and 40 percent of all fatalities involved nursing home patients. Those figures do not include cases and fatalities recorded in Detroit, which maintains its own statistics.

Because the state is responsible for licensing and regulation of nursing homes, the resolution strongly encourages the Michigan Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs, Bureau of Community and Health Systems to increase inspections to assure county facilities are
fully implementing all precautions necessary to protect patients and staff during the COVID-19 pandemic.

It also implores the Bureau of Community and Health Systems to conduct inspections unannounced, to assure they provide a true representation of how facilities operate on a day-to-day basis.

RESOLUTION
By Commissioners Bell and Haidous

WHEREAS, on March 10, 2020, Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer issued Executive Order No. 2020-4, which declared a state of emergency across the State of Michigan to mitigate the spread of COVID-19, to protect the public health, and provide essential protections to vulnerable Michiganders; and

WHEREAS, the living environment of individuals residing in nursing care facilities contributes to their increased exposure to and risks of contracting COVID-19; and

WHEREAS, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s (CDC) website, individuals at high risk for severe illness from COVID-19 are “people who live in a nursing home or long-term care facility,” and people who are “65 years and older” and those with “underlying medical conditions.” All three of the CDC’s high-risk factors apply to a great majority of the individuals residing in nursing care facilities in Wayne County; and

WHEREAS, in Wayne County, there have been a number of reported cases of COVID-19 in individuals residing in nursing care facilities. In many instances, there have been multiple cases and related deaths from COVID-19 within the same facility; and

WHEREAS, the personal accounts of family members and friends of individuals working and residing in nursing care facilities and media reports suggest that many nursing care facilities have not implemented all necessary precautions to protect this vulnerable population; and

WHEREAS, all nursing care facility staff should regularly and properly use personal protection equipment such as gloves, masks and disinfectant. In addition, the CDC recommends
safeguards such as restricting visitors, regularly checking health care workers and residents for fevers and symptoms, and limiting activities within the facilities; and

WHEREAS, the Michigan Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs, Bureau of Community and Health Systems (BCHS) issues licenses to and conducts routine inspections of nursing care facilities in Michigan; and

WHEREAS, additional unannounced inspections by the BCHS of nursing care facilities would ensure increased compliance with safety precautions that would help reduce the spread of COVID-19 in and, ultimately, save the lives of individuals residing in nursing care facilities; and

WHEREAS, it is critical that during this unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic that extraordinary measures are implemented to protect the health, safety and welfare of our residents, including prioritizing government resources in a manner that best protects the most vulnerable members in our communities.

Now therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the Wayne County Commission on this 30th day of April, 2020 does hereby respectfully requests and strongly encourages the Michigan Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs, Bureau of Community and Health Systems to increase the number and frequency of its inspections of nursing care facilities in Wayne County to ensure that the facilities are implementing all precautions necessary to protect the individuals residing and working in the facilities from COVID-19; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Wayne County Commission implores the Bureau of Community and Health Systems to conduct unannounced inspections of nursing care facilities to ascertain a true account of how the facilities operate on daily basis, and be it further

RESOLVED, that a copy of this Resolution be forwarded to Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer; Orlene Hawks, Director of the Michigan Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs; Larry Horvath, Director of the Bureau of Community and Health Systems; and all members of the Wayne County delegation in the Michigan Legislature.