Governor Ron DeSantis Announces Task Force to Explore the Safe and Limited Re-Opening of Long-Term Care Facilities

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Tallahassee, Fla. – Today, Governor Ron DeSantis announced the formation of Florida's Task Force on the Safe and Limited Re-Opening of Long-Term Care Facilities. Members of the task force will work together to develop guidelines on how to safely allow family members to visit their loved ones in Florida's long-term care facilities where visitation has been prohibited since March due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

"The last four and a half months have been difficult for all Floridians, especially our residents in long-term care facilities and their families," **said Governor DeSantis**. "In an effort to protect our most vulnerable, we made the difficult decision in March to prohibit visitation to these facilities. While these measures were necessary, it has taken an emotional toll on our families. I look forward to the ideas that arise from this task force on how we can continue our mission to protect the vulnerable while allowing for the much-needed human connection of spending time with family and friends."

Members of the Task Force on the Safe and Limited Re-Opening of Long-Term Care Facilities are below:

Mary Daniel, Caregiver

Mary Daniel is married to her husband Steve who has early onset Alzheimer's disease and resides in a memory care unit of a nursing home. When visitation to long-term care facilities was suspended due to COVID-19, Mary reached out to Rosecastle staff and asked if she could volunteer or get a job at the care center just for the opportunity to see her husband of 24 years in person again. She was hired as a dishwasher and has been working with other families to come up with creative solutions to lessen the burden of isolation during the current pandemic.

Mary Mayhew, Secretary, Agency for Health Care Administration

Mary Mayhew is Secretary of the Florida Agency for Health Care Administration. In this role, Mary leads a $29.4 billion health care enterprise, representing close to 31% of Florida's total state budget, and is responsible for health policy and planning for the State of Florida. As Secretary, she administers the state's Medicaid program to ensure the comprehensive healthcare needs of close to 4 million Floridians are met every month. Additionally, her oversight extends to the licensure and regulation of over 50,000 health care facilities across the 3rd largest state in the nation, and is charged with promoting the transparency of consumer health care information through the Agency's Florida Center for Health Information and Transparency.

Richard Prudom, Secretary, Florida Department of Elder Affairs

Richard Prudom currently serves as Secretary for the Florida Department of Elder Affairs, the State Unit on Aging, whose mission is to help Florida's 5.5 million elders remain healthy, safe, and independent. Secretary Prudom has more than 30 years in executive leadership with the State of Florida where he has worked to develop, implement, and lead public policies and programs that improve the lives of Florida families. Since 2011, he has served at the Department of Elder Affairs as Deputy Secretary, Chief of Staff, and Chief Financial Officer.

Dr. Scott Rivkees, State Surgeon General, Florida Department of Health

Dr. Rivkees currently serves as Florida's Surgeon General. As Surgeon General, Dr. Rivkees also serves as state health officer for the Florida Department of Health. In this capacity, he oversees the operations of the state health office in Tallahassee, 67 county health departments, 22 area offices for the Division of Children's Medical Services, 12 regional offices for the Division of Medical Quality Assurance, nine area offices for the Division of Disability Determinations and four public health laboratories.

Gail Matillo, President and CEO, Florida Senior Living Association

As the Association's President/CEO, Gail Matillo is responsible for directing the association and identifying policy objectives that support Florida Senior Living Association's mission, vision and growth. Previously, she spent more than two years as the State Housing Director with the Florida Department of Elder Affairs and more than 18 years with the Florida Association of Homes and Services for the Aging, now LeadingAge Florida, as the Director of Housing and Professional Development. Gail has a master's degree in public administration, and a bachelor's degree in business and health care administration.

Emmett Reed, Executive Director, Florida Health Care Association

Emmett Reed currently serves as the Executive Director for the Florida Health Care Association (FHCA), the state's first and largest advocacy organization for long-term care providers and the residents under their care.

Michelle Branham, Vice President of Public Policy, Alzheimer's Association

Michelle Branham is vice president of public policy for the Alzheimer's Association. She currently serves as co-chair of the State Health Improvement Plan (SHIP) Priority 9 and the Trust for America's Health Advisory Council. Previously, she was a senior vice president of marketing for Adventure Holdings. Branham earned her bachelor's degree in political science from Stetson University and her master's degree in theological studies and human relations from Emory University. In August 2019, Governor DeSantis appointed her to serve on the Alzheimer's Disease Advisory Committee.

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