State of Ohio offers $28 million air quality program for senior living facilities

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NEWS RELEASE
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Federal CARES Act dollars target nursing homes, assisted living centers, day centers

COLUMBUS – In the continuing battle to weaken COVID-19's spread, the state of Ohio is offering $28 million in federal CARES (Coronavirus, Aid, Relief, and Economic Security) Act dollars to reimburse facilities serving older Ohioans that invest in air quality and air flow improvements during the pandemic.

"This program will improve the indoor air quality and reduce potential infection due to COVID-19 at nursing homes, assisted living centers, and adult day centers," said Governor Mike DeWine. "This program is critical as we continue to protect vulnerable Ohioans from catching COVID-19."

Governor DeWine asked the Ohio Bureau of Workers' Compensation (BWC) to administer the program because of its expertise administering millions of dollars a year in grants that help employers improve workplace safety.

"We're pleased Governor DeWine has given us the opportunity to get these critical federal funds to employers who take care of older Ohioans," said BWC Interim Administrator/CEO John Logue. "We're here to assist the state's COVID-19 fight in any way we can."

The COVID-19 Indoor Air Quality Assistance Program will reimburse nursing homes, assisted living centers, and adult day centers that invested in air quality improvements on or after March 1, 2020, through Dec. 30 this year.

Eligible entities will receive up to $15,000 to inspect and assess their air quality needs and to address those needs through portable air filtration systems, new filtration systems, maintenance on current systems, and other interventions. A priority will be placed on equipment where repair or replacement has been deferred.

Ohio Department of Aging Director Ursel J. McElroy praised the program, calling it a welcomed tool in the battle to protect Ohio's most vulnerable population against the novel coronavirus.

"The COVID-19 pandemic has been hard on all Ohioans, but perhaps on no one more than our older citizens," said McElroy. "We are so grateful for this funding, and I know our nursing homes, assisted living centers, and adult day centers will appreciate this relief, too."

Added Ohio Department of Health Chief Medical Officer Dr. Bruce Vanderhoff: "We know the lack of proper ventilation is a contributing factor in COVID-19 outbreaks. With effective ventilation and filtration, the number of viral airborne droplets can be reduced."

The state's Controlling Board on Monday authorized BWC to appropriate the federal funds. BWC's Board of Directors approved the program in a special meeting Wednesday.

Click here for an FAQ on this program. Other questions about the program should be emailed to grants@bwc.state.oh.us.

Click here for an application.

The CARES Act allows states to use federal funding from the Federal Coronavirus Relief Fund for necessary expenditures incurred by the state due to COVID-19 that were not authorized as part of the state budget.

For more on BWC, visit, www.bwc.ohio.gov.

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Established in 1912, the Ohio Bureau of Workers' Compensation is the exclusive provider of workers' compensation insurance in Ohio and serves 249,000 public and private employers. With nearly 1,800 employees and assets of approximately $28 billion, BWC is one of the largest state-run insurance systems in the United States. Our mission is to deliver consistently excellent experiences for each BWC customer every day. For more, visit www.bwc.ohio.gov.