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**House of Representatives**

Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

April 17, 2020

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Dr. Rachel Levine  
Secretary, PA Department of Health  
8th Floor West  
Health and Welfare Bldg.  
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Dear Dr. Levine,

I write today in support for increasing accessibility to expedited testing for residents and workers in long term care facilities. I certainly appreciate the important work and difficult decisions before you to protect Pennsylvanians' from the dangers of COVID-19. I also understand that the testing supplies to detect the virus are limited. Nevertheless, in light of the alarming numbers of deaths associated with long-term care facilities in Montgomery County and across Pennsylvania, we must prioritize the well-being of some of our most vulnerable individuals during this outbreak, our older adults residing in nursing homes and other long term care facilities.

While other states have, unfortunately, experienced hundreds of cases and deaths in facilities before drastic protection measures were taken, I commend the Department of Health for issuing guidance for nursing home residents and staff at the beginning of this crisis. Sadly, cases continue to rise in these types of facilities, as asymptomatic residents and staff unintentionally spread the virus. It is vital for us to have testing available for those facilities to gather an accurate depiction of the realities they are facing and respond appropriately. Currently, only symptomatic residents and staff have access to testing. Providing accessibility to expedited testing for long term care residents and workers ensures the virus is not being inadvertently spread by those who carry it but are asymptomatic.

As you are aware, older adults aged 65 and up comprise more than half of the COVID-19 related hospitalization cases to date in Pennsylvania. Given the vulnerability of this age group, our Commonwealth should prioritize testing for all workers and residents in these facilities to ensure we are doing all we can to identify, prevent, respond to and contain the virus.

I thank you for your attention to this matter and your consideration of this important request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Todd Stephens".

Todd Stephens  
State Representative  
151<sup>st</sup> Legislative District