



J. Kevin Stitt
Office of the Governor
State of Oklahoma

June 2, 2020

Dear Senate Minority Leader Kay Floyd:

Thank you for your letter and your dedication to our state's most vulnerable citizens who reside in nursing homes and long-term care facilities. We share your urgency, and, in fact, increased our focus on these facilities over a month ago. As you noted, the Governor's Solution Task Force and the Oklahoma State Department of Health are committed to providing support to residents and staff of these facilities with regular COVID-19 testing. Furthermore, we activated the Oklahoma National Guard to professionally sanitize facilities, and we have helped some facilities navigate alternative, licensed locations to isolate and quarantine residents.

Most visibly, the State has used federal funding to navigate a disrupted global market of personal protective equipment to procure this critical supply and deploy it to these facilities, and we have contracted with a company to provide FIT testing of N95 masks for facilities with COVID-19 exposure. While every life lost is regrettable, we are confident that the provision of PPE to these facilities has prevented further loss of life. The State is committed to standing in the gap where basic services are unavailable or out of reach to help keep staff and residents safe and healthy.

As of Friday, May 29, OSDH has tested more than 35,800 residents and staff at 265 nursing homes and long-term care facilities across Oklahoma, an endeavor that began in earnest May 1. Ahead of the initial goal of May 31, the State was able to conduct testing in all facilities that already had a confirmed case of COVID-19 or had residents and/or staff reporting symptoms of the novel virus. During the month of May, some of these facility residents and staff were tested multiple times.

To put this in perspective, the testing conducted across these nursing home and long-term care facilities alone is nearly double the number of tests conducted statewide from the general public in the month of April. Thanks to the hardworking public employees and Oklahoma's health care professionals, the State was able to quadruple testing overall in the month of May. They quickly and successfully adapted to this remarkable increase in workload, and we are in the midst of improving our infrastructure and expanding staffing to ensure we can maintain this momentum, which will include regular surveillance testing across Oklahoma's nursing homes and long-term care facilities.

We expect to conclude testing on the remaining nursing homes and long-term care facilities by June 5. In the meantime, we can report that 91 facilities in Oklahoma have had at least one positive case of COVID-19. We have also found that 98% of these facilities were following CDC guidelines, and only two were reported for violations, which have been appropriately documented and partnerships formed to help these facilities adjust practices and enhance services for their residents.

The State is continuing its weekly discussions with long-term care facilities and nursing homes ahead of issuing guidance to resume limited visitations. As our surveillance testing plans and COVID-19 guidance progresses, we are committed to keeping the public and all stakeholders informed. Thank you for your letter, and for your shared concerns for the population most at risk in Oklahoma with the presence of COVID-19.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of J. Kevin Stitt in black ink, written over a horizontal line.

J. Kevin Stitt
Governor of Oklahoma

Handwritten signature of Lance Frye in black ink, written over a horizontal line.

Lance Frye, MD
Interim Commissioner of Health