



Testimony in Support of An Act to Ensure the Collection of COVID-19 Data (S.2753)

David A. Bryant
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Massachusetts Association of Community Development Corporations
to the
Joint Committee on Public Health

July 7, 2020

Chairwoman Comerford, Chairman Mahoney, and distinguished members of the Committee, thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony in support of S.2753.

MACDC and its members are deeply committed to keeping our residents safe during the COVID-19 pandemic, especially our senior residents. Our members have instituted a wide range of programs and services to provide up-to-date information to our residents, to modify protocols and procedures to reduce the risk of infection, to deliver food to those in need, and to reduce/eliminate visitors in order to minimize the chance of COVID-19 at our properties. While we know of many long-term care facilities that have had significant outbreaks of COVID-19, we are not aware of similar problems in well managed, non-profit senior housing developments.

We completely support the goals of the Legislature in ensuring detailed reporting and transparency in our long-term care facilities. The legislation previously enacted will go a long way to protecting our seniors.

At the same time, this new bill filed by Governor Baker, is necessary to correct a flaw in the earlier reporting legislation which generally provided for increased transparency in reporting about COVID cases—a laudable goal. MACDC represents several organizations that provide affordable housing for seniors. For these affordable senior housing providers, the requirements, as written create enormous and counterproductive burden:

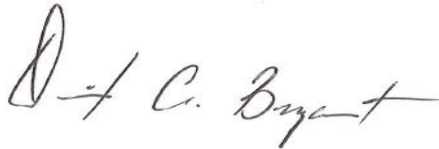
- Affordable senior housing providers do not know who tests positive unless the local board of health chooses to tell them — and in almost all cases, they do not. Affordable senior housing providers may or may not hear from a resident that they tested positive—and these reports are anecdotal and not always accurate. The local

board of health is the first to receive the news of the positive case—so asking the housing provider to somehow find out and report back to them does not make sense.

- Affordable senior housing providers should not be sending letters daily when a case occurs in a building. We have heard from our members that doing so frightens their residents and family members without providing any information that was useful to them in their quest to stay safe. The reporting requirement in the bill should specify that it can be met via website posting.
- Our members' staff are engaged 24/7 in efforts to keep their residents safe. We understand that if this reporting requirement were to stay in effect, these affordable senior housing providers would need to re-assign some staff members to simply keep up with the reporting—at the expense of tasks that actually keep residents safe.

We urge you to report favorably S.2753 to clarify that senior housing providers should continue to keep tenants safe and have reporting done by medical or public health personnel.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David A. Bryant". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "D".

David A. Bryant