

I have been in the long term care industry for over thirteen years, with much focus on the needs of those with dementia. When this pandemic hit, care communities were locked down, and visitation was prohibited. Residents were shut in their rooms. Another wave of problems has been created. Many seniors move out of their beloved homes for the purpose of avoiding isolation. Isolation escalates any type of dementia, creates anxiety, depression, and overwhelming feelings of abandonment. Family and Friends visiting see the quality of care or lack thereof happening in the communities. On this note, it has been extremely disappointing that our own state licensors and inspectors were locked out of doing routine and renewal surveys, and only responded when there was a significant report of abuse occurring. I have also been told by several sources that reported abuse is significantly down. I see a direct correlation with a lack of outside eyes, being able to report such situations. People with Dementia have a much harder time with virtual visitation, and do not understand why their loved ones are not coming to see them. Two dimensional concept is not enough. They feel completely abandoned. I have one client that, on the rare occasions he has been able to speak to his wife on the phone start wailing hysterically he thought she was killed in a horrible accident. We don't know where their imagination goes. The Oregon Senior Referral Agency Association OSRAA, donated over fifty tablets to LTC facilities that specifically accept Medicaid, in an effort to facilitate virtual visitation. Some are being used as intended, but the bigger argument from the communities is a lack of staff to set up a virtual visit – as we all are aware, many seniors are technologically challenged or physically impaired to be able to hear or see the device, and a care giver needs to be available for constant adjustment if necessary. I have had families call me during this time, reporting that even prisoners get visitors and I cannot see my mom unless she is dying. I believe this bill is wonderful start to a solution.