

Ladies and Gentlemen of the Work Group, my name is Danielle Salisbury, and I am the Campus Administrator of EagleCrest, a Presbyterian Homes and Services Community located in Roseville. I have the honor of serving 256 older adults.

When asked to share about the experiences in long term care since March 11th, 2020 when we closed our doors to the general public, I didn't really know where to begin. It has been a tiring 17 months to say the least. Since we stopped visitors on March 11, it has been a whirlwind.

On March 11, 2020, we closed our doors to the general public to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in our community. Since that day, we have experienced unbelievable highs and lows as we do our best to serve the seniors that have chosen our community as their home.

I have watched social media, the news, and hear conversations between many individuals regarding all that COVID has taken away and the impact it's had. I want to express first that each person has every right to whatever emotion that they have felt about the last 17 months. I don't want to mitigate anyone's experience because each is unique and tragic in its own way. But from my own lens of the world, I have witnessed the effects of COVID-19 on my residents. They were not allowed to have physical contact with their loved ones for many months. Until recently, they couldn't go on trips or outings, they couldn't dine together, and they could only interact from afar.

COVID has taken so much from the older adults I have served. However, COVID could not take away love.

Our staff, too, have stepped up in ways that exceed all expectations. I have personally witnessed the very best in people as they serve with dedication, grace and love in all they do. They have gone above and beyond the work they signed up to do. Our head engineer became a continental breakfast queen when we could only serve breakfast in bags to go. Our maintenance man and resident services director became a two-man moving company when residents needed to move but moving companies were no longer allowed inside. I have seen home health aides sit, pray and sing with residents who were anxious and scared.

I have seen our Human Resource Rep and life enrichment assistant collect cards and drawings from strangers to give to our residents. I have seen occupational therapists doing laundry and delivering meals, and physical therapists screening, delivering packages and hand sewing masks. I have seen our housing counselors act as servers when we needed a helping hand. I have seen our resident services team delivering activities to resident apartments and facilitating Christmas Parties via Facetime. I have seen our pastor lead hallway activities on each floor. I have seen receptionists compassionately calm nervous family members. All this amidst, a real fear of an unknown virus early in the pandemic. In the earliest days, we knew so little about the virus we were fighting, we had limited PPE, no testing, and no vaccines. Yet our staff, despite their own fears of getting sick, show up every day.

When you walk around Target now, the pandemic seems as if it is fading away. Masks are mostly gone, the stickers on the floor urging those to stay six feet apart have disappeared. Unfortunately for those in long term care the pandemic is far from over. Direct caregivers still must wear surgical masks and eye protection while helping a resident with daily activities like taking a shower or getting dressed. We continue to screen every person that walks through the door. We are serving the most vulnerable and must remain cautious.

I continue to urge my teammates to keep going, to hang in there - but they are tired - heck I'm tired. The number of open positions we have has nearly doubled in the last few months. Front line staff are stepping up, working extra shifts, and forgoing the vacations we all expect during Minnesota's summer months. Where there are holes, the team fills in. Just this weekend, I served lunch and dinner and our Director of Nursing took a shift as a nursing assistant. Our HR rep and Life Enrichment Director served meals over the weekend. This coming weekend we have 15 shifts to left to fill.

What I want you to know is that for our residents and our staff, this pandemic is not over. It's not enough to simply say thank you on social media or put up a sign honoring our heroes. A bonus for our caregivers is a public way for the State to honor the incredible work caregivers have done throughout the last year and a half and the work they will continue to do to serve Minnesota's seniors. From the very beginning of the 2021 legislative session, we called on lawmakers to support a bipartisan bill introduced by Rep. Erin Koegel and Sen. Karin Housley that would give a \$700 Hero Pay Bonus directly to caregivers that served on the frontlines throughout the pandemic.

Today, I respectfully renew our request and ask for your support for a one-time \$700 bonus, paid directly to the dedicated caregivers employed in long-term care to acknowledge and support their commitment throughout these dangerous and unprecedented circumstances.

Thank you for your attention and for your consideration bonuses for those working in long term care, I can attest that each one of my coworkers deserves it.